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Running head: AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE LEADERS

Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE LEADERS: RESILIENCE AND SUCCESS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership  
by

Shanetta Weatherspoon-Robinson

June, 2013

Dr. James DellaNeve Dissertation – Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Shanetta Weatherspoon-Robinson

Under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my closest family and friends.

- To my Grandmother, Ms. Dora Thomas, who is the rock of the family. You are a true leader in every sense of the word.
- To my Mother, Johnetta Thomas, who is strong, sweet and so important to me.
- Auntie Mick “my God momma”, who steps up and in whenever it is necessary; I love you.
- Auntie Gretchen, who is my prayer warrior and friend.
- Aunt Chris, Cousin Phil, Carol Weatherspoon and all of the women before me who have poured so much of themselves into me.
- To my children, Nailah Christine Robinson and Ray Edward Robinson Jr. who are my gifts from God and my biggest support. I will never forget the time Nailah told her friend “my mommy will be a doctor soon, not the kind that check your ears but the kind that read a lot”. Without Nailah, whose name means successful woman and who was born on my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, I would have dropped out of school my freshman year of undergraduate. And Lil Ray, my “ittles”, who I see so much of myself in that it is sometimes scary. Thank you guys for all the encouragement, love and structure you bring to my life.
- To my sister and brothers, Jasmine Rhaburn, John Rhaburn, and Tramond Holmes, my first children, you have been my motivation. You and the kiddies looking up to me is a constant reminder that I have been placed on this earth for a special reason and “what’s more special than you?”
- To my extended family members and friends, I love each of you and I hope that

shows every day. I could list you all but that would take too long.

- To those who have gone to heaven but who are my constant angels, Petey Christopher Burke “Uncle Petey” my father, uncle, big cousin and friend, Arma Crumb “Granny” my “let you have it great-grandmother”, Merle Nobles “Mrs. Merle” my mentor and friend, and Gloria Jones “Glow” my kiddies “other” grandmother.

I am forever in debt to you all.

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This journey is one that was traveled fairly quickly if you only count the dissertation process but I believe that completion of this study is the culmination of a lifelong aspiration to become more than a statistic and transition into feeling like a whole person. I cannot and will not say that I did this alone. It literally took a village.

I would like to acknowledge all of my cheerleaders, supporters, paper readers and peers, over the years, in no particular order but including;

- Lynette Johnson-Tyler, my dear colleague and friend whose eyes are probably sore from not only reading this document but many of my papers since my graduate degree.
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- Marquina McNabb, one of my rocks, no one knows what “I beez in the trap” mean but you and I (and whoever else I share the story with).
- Jessica Meza, I would have never made it through undergraduate without you, I love you.
- Sammy Troung, for being my quite warrior and true friend.
- Brandy Jones, you are a real friend and I wish you can see what I see in you.
- Andraya Carrier, the big sister I needed, I love you.
- Melinda Woolen, Kymeshia Kizzee, Cynee Davis, Kensley Davis and Teneya Busby, love each of you.
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the bottom now my whole team here”.

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I would also like to acknowledge my prestigious committee;

- Dr. James “Rocco” DelleNave, committee chair, you are a quick thinker and so contemporary in every way. When I gave you my timeline you didn't discourage me, you said “you can do it” and that was rare and appreciated. I would not have been able to make it through this process without your wit and well-rounded expertise. My grandmother once told me that “you can have all the book smarts in the world but if you don't have commonsense you will not go far”. When I met you, I said “now there's a professor with commonsense”.

- Dr. Ann Maria Demars you are a firecracker. You are not only one of the most intelligent people I have ever met, but you are also the most “realist” Latina genius. Meaning, although you are a genius in every sense of the word, you are also the most straightforward and “you get what you see” type of sister I know. I would have been lost without you.
- Dr. Weber, thank you for taking on this project with all of your other obligations. I remember you sent me your vita and it was about 30 or so pages long. While reading it, I was thinking “wow, I want to be like her when I grow up”. Although you were a quiet warrior on this project, you model professionalism, intellect and commitment to women empowerment and that is invaluable to me.

Last but not least, I would like to give thanks to God who has provided for my children and I through this process. As I reflect, the bible scripture that is most relevant is “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed”- 2 Corinthians 4:9 With that I say, THANK YOU FATHER.

## VITA

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2012 Marital	Western Users of SAS Software – Paper Proceedings “I Want to Get Married Too: Assessing the Relationship between Status and Education for African American Women”
2012 Conference	Central Pennsylvania Consortium: 2012 Women's Studies Paper Accepted
2012	The 20th Annual Women's Studies Conference “ <i>Women and Labor: At Home, At Work, Around the Globe</i> ” Presenter & Session Chair
2012	Pasadena Education & Resource Expo Presenter - Parent Power: Influence vs. Control

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Robinson, S. W., Jiles, T. R., & Demars, A. (2012). *I want to get married too: Assessing the relationship between marital status and education for African American women*. Retrieved from <http://www.wuss.org/proceedings12/96.pdf>.

## **Volunteer Experience**

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## ABSTRACT

Women make up half of the workforce in America. Despite this, in traditional organizations, leadership roles are overwhelmingly held by men. Of the small number of African American women employed in the workforce, 30% hold professional or management positions and women in general are more educated, qualified and transformational than their male counterparts. Despite this, African American female leaders experience organizational barriers, social labeling, and biases driven by their intersectionality that hinders their career opportunities. Black feminist research suggests that social norms place women in subordinate roles in comparison to men in society. African American women face such social barriers at a higher level given additional societal hardships driven by racism. Literature on African American female leadership outlines the barriers, but there is a limited amount of literature that seeks to appreciate Black female leadership as it relates to their style characteristics, expertise, and experience within their organizations regarding their leadership styles and the resilience required to maintain success in their positions. In order to add to the body of research in this area, this study explored the leadership characteristics, barriers, success strategies and resilience of African American female leaders through the lenses of these women. This study assessed leadership and resilience in African American females who hold higher level positions of leadership in traditionally White, male dominated industries. The purpose of the research was to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking positions despite the documented adversities associated with African American women, who hold leadership positions. The goal was to provide a guide for women who aspire towards entering particular fields and holding similar leadership positions and to

provide an outline of their success in order to offer a blueprint for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for women.

## **Chapter 1: The Problem**

“Gender and women's empowerment is at the core of what we need to do in the field of development. Gender equality is also smart economics. Research demonstrates that progress in the area of women's economic empowerment is still far, far too slow. Whether it is the question of employment, opportunity, pay, or access to finance, there is a tremendous amount of work to do to level the playing field for women.”- Robert B. Zoellick President (World Bank Group, 2008)

Women outnumber men in the U.S., account for 50% of the workforce nationally, and make up over half of the global workforce (Bollinger, 2008; UN Women, 2011). Additionally, women held nearly 52% of high paying management and professional occupations in the U.S in 2009 (United States Department of Labor, 2009). Of those the African American women employed, over 30% held professional position. According to Bollinger (2008), the U.S. minority population reached 100.7 million, in 2007. Meaning one out of every three people are of minority descent. Additionally, women owned businesses positively impact the economy grossing, over 1 trillion in revenue. Over 911,000 of these were owned by African-American women. In fact, the majority of African-American owned businesses are owned by women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Moreover, women have proven their abilities as leaders, often being considered more transformational than their male counterparts, improving organizational performance, increasing motivation among their followers and demonstrating exemplary communication styles in leadership (Hite, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2011). Despite this progress, social norms place women in subordinate roles in comparison to men in the society, especially in regard to leadership. Social barriers are intensified for African

American women given additional societal hardships driven by racism, compared to women of nonminority descent (Hite, 2004; Lott 2009; Peters, Kinsey, & Malloy, 2004). Bollinger suggests that it will take nearly 75 years for the gender disparity in business to lessen and for leadership to become reflective of the American workforce. The organizational and systematic hardship experienced by women is even more extreme for women of color who pursue, attain and retain leadership positions, particularly African American women (Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009; Peters et al., 2004).

### **Background**

Despite glass ceiling practices and other barriers that hinder Black professional women's career growth, leadership opportunities and their experiences at work, there is no doubt that women are advancing in America (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005; Robbins & Judge, 2011). Specifically, leadership opportunities for African American women are more visible in industries across the nation (Hite, 2004). For example, in 1999, Catherine Hughes became the first Black woman to lead a firm toward being traded publicly in a stock exchange in America. In 2009, Ursula Burns became the first African American female CEO of a fortune 500 company (Anne Mulcahy, 2009; U.S. Department of State, 2012). Kamala Harris became the first African American female Attorney General in California. Condoleezza Rice is the first Black woman to serve as Secretary of State and as President Barack Obama became the first African American President of the free world, his wife, Michelle Obama became the first Black First Lady. Although these examples exist, there is still a crucial disparity in the opportunities for advancement and other fundamental aspects that increase the possibility of continual growth within organizations for Black female (Hite, 2004). These shifts in leadership incidents among

women, combined with actual disparity of opportunity for women of color, especially Black women, have profound implications for contemporary organizations, leadership and women studies (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005; Stanley, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems in leadership for women, specifically African American leaders include:

1. A clear, documented and critical gender disparity in leadership across industries and in many male dominated professions including finance and business. Specifically, leadership is becoming reflective of the workforce but the process is extremely slow (Bollinger, 2008; Brown, Haygood, & McLean, 2010; Dobbs, Thomas, & Harris, 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2011).
2. When race is coupled with gender the disparity is even larger, particularly for African American women (Evans, 2009; Stanley, 2009). Evans (2009) states that “the entire population of female corporate leaders is very small and almost exclusively made up of White women of European ancestry” (p. 9).
3. Despite this disparity, women, specifically African American females, have continued to rise above the many challenges they face in leadership but their feats have not been properly documented in literature for the benefit of next generation of aspiring leaders practically and academically (Alston, 2005; Byrd, 2009; Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009; Wolfe, 2010).

4. There is gap in literature on leadership. Most of the literature on leadership is male dominated and specific to White males (Evans, 2009). There is even less literature linking resilience to leadership.
5. There are not enough practical tools in the form of modeling opportunities, best practices and mentoring that could assist female leaders in their ascent in leadership. Hackman & Johnson (2004) suggest that in order to narrow the leadership gap and promote diversity; organizations must employ organizational strategies that will systematically promote the advancement of female leaders. For example, companies can bridge the gap by “aggressive recruitment, greater accountability for developing female leaders, formulation of advocacy groups, mentorship, and executive development programs” (p.306).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to offer a practical tool for aspiring women leaders of color, developed from the collective experiences of African American female leaders by understanding their barriers, success strategies, and the level of resilience needed to attain, retain, and excel in leadership positions. Because of the disparities among women in leadership roles, particularly, African American women, female leaders have a hard time finding mentors and are faced with biases that hinder their experience drawn from preconceived stereotypes of women in leadership (Brown et al., 2010; Dobbs et al., 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2004; King & Ferguson, 2011; Robbins & Judge, 2011). Obvious enough, this problem exists, because women are becoming more visible or acknowledged as leaders in traditionally male dominated positions (Brown et al., 2010;

Dobbs et al., 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Particularly, in corporate, public, and private organizations, minority female leaders are stepping up to the challenge of leadership, but are embarking on unfamiliar territory (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009). Given the incremental growth of women in advanced leadership positions, specifically African American women, organizations should foster growth and educational opportunities by incorporating mentorship practices and communication that will lessen the effects of stereotypes, organizational, and social barriers on female leaders. Further, women of color need a comprehensive tool that will aid them in embracing their leadership identities (King & Ferguson, 2011).

In addition, the literature on Black female leadership focuses on organizational barriers and stereotypes, thus limiting the scope of analysis and the developmental opportunities for Black women. Literature also recommends that further research include practical or theoretical tools that would assist future leaders as they cope with the demands of leadership and that would aid organizations' human resource departments as they support the new faces of leadership (Alston, 2005; Hite, 2004; Stanley, 2009).

For example, Dobbs et al. (2008) and Byrd (2009) explored perceptions and stereotypes that affect the African American female experience in the workplace and in leadership positions, respectively. Dobbs et al. assert that despite these stereotypes, Black female leaders can overcome the effects of these labels by having good work life balance, understanding their own authentic leadership style and value, setting tangible standards of success without limiting themselves, and using these perceptions for the greater good of all minority women. Like Dobbs et al., Byrd found that the Black female leadership experience includes limited access to advancement opportunities despite qualifications, as

well as a constant struggle with overcoming stereotypes. The study only confirmed that Black female leaders do experience racism, sexism, and classism on their quest to lead. Byrd also asserts that African American women overcame barriers by staying focused on their goals and remaining true to themselves. The findings suggest that organizations must acquire resources and tools that will continually promote diversity from the top down. In addition, Human Resource Development (HRD) aspects related to addressing race, gender, and class have to be developed and applied in contemporary organizations and HRD (Robbins & Judge, 2011; Stanley, 2009).

Stanley (2009) suggests that the problem in the field of HRD is that organizations are not equipped to address issues of the growing workforce of women and minorities. The purpose of HRD is to enhance human proficiency and the “learning and performance” of staff within an organization; however HRD lacks the theoretical understanding of the intersectionality of minorities, especially Black women. Robinson, Jiles, and Demars (2012) describe intersectionality as “the subordinate position for which minority women experience common life occurrences given interrelated socioeconomic variables” (p. 2). This is an issue, because intersectionality shapes the everyday work and social experience of Black women. In that, organizations must invest in reshaping organizational structures and practices in order to address the needs of their employees (Stanley, 2009). In order to begin that undertaking, a clear understanding of leadership, the interconnected affects of race, economic conditions, and gender, and the success factors of female leaders must be evaluated. Research suggests that resilience is among those factors (Pully & Wakefield, 2001).



Similar to the study of leadership, the collective study on resilience also began in the field of psychology (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2011). Snyder and Lopez (2002) suggested that resilient children acclimate in adversity with a heightened sense of hope. Resilience in its simplest form is positive adaptation during adverse circumstances (Herrman et al., 2001). Although research on African American female leaders has outlined the adverse experiences with regard to attaining, maintaining, and succeeding as leaders, there is limited research linking resilience to leadership, less even linking resilience to African American female leaders (Grafton, Gillespie, & Henderson, 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study will assess leadership and resilience in African American females who hold higher level positions of leadership in traditionally White, male dominated industries. The purpose of the research is to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement, and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership appointments. The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire towards entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resiliency of African American women in order to provide blueprints for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for female leaders.

**Research Questions & Exploratory Hypothesis**

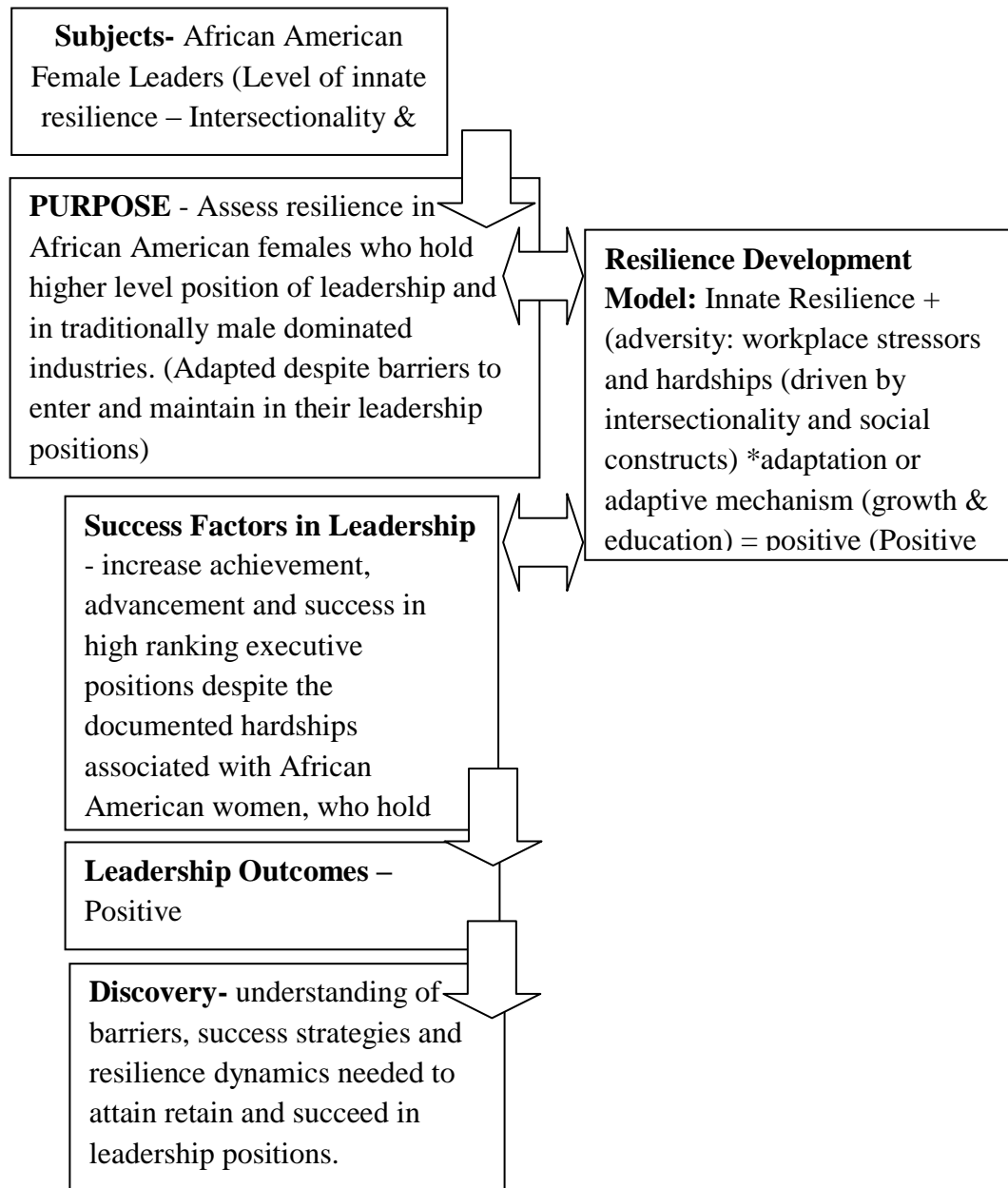
In order to explore the gravity of the problem faced by African American female leaders and the factors that influence their success despite such hardships, this study poses the following questions:

1. What are the leadership characteristics of Black female leaders?
2. What are the assumptions of these leaders with regard to their followers?
3. How do these leaders view the role of women in leadership?
4. What barriers to career success do African American female leaders report as having to overcome?
5. How do African American women overcome barriers to career success?
6. What are the factors required to retain career success?
7. What level of resilience is needed in such leadership positions in order to succeed?

Resilience is defined below as the adaption to adversity. Research on resilience has moved incrementally to include both qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Wagnild & Collins, 2009). Generally, the studies utilize prescribed resilience scales coupled with open ended questions. Given that the current study is exploratory in nature and there is a limited amount of research linking Black female leaders to resilience, the hypothesis is that there is a difference in resilience for African American leaders compared to the general population. This notion is driven from the theory on Black feminism that poses that adverse circumstances and intersectionality is part of lived experiences of Black women, particularly in leadership (Hite, 2004; King & Ferguson, 2011; Stanley, 2009).

**Theoretical Framework**

This research is informed by Black feminist research that outlines the African American women's situated experience of race, gender, and economic disparities, referred to by scholars as intersectionality. Intersectionality adds additional hardship to the leadership experience for African American women (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Stanley, 2009). Therefore it is necessary to understand the other factors that contribute to the experience and promote success. Black female leaders' experiences of adversity, is documented in literature (Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009; Stanley, 2009). Resilience is the positive adaptation to adversity. Hence, assessing the intersection of resilience and leadership with regard to the African American female leader is vital to advancement of the studies in this area. Grafton et al. (2010) proposed the Resilience Development Model, which suggests that everyone has innate resilience that is then developed by processes, which are triggered by adversity. Eventually, coping or adaptation occurs. This decreases the negative impact, thus improving the positive outcomes in the workplace (Grafton et al., 2010). Drawing from the Resilience Development Model, Figure 1 illustrates the movement of ideas that are behind this exploratory hypothesis.



*Figure 1.* Theoretical Framework. Adapted from Grafton, Gillespie, & Henderson, 2010)

Figure 1 was developed from out of Grafton et al. (2010) visual depiction of the resilience development model. It is explained in their terms as such:

“Conceptualization of resilience as an innate energy or life force provides an insight into resilience as an internal resource on which individuals can draw to motivate, enable, and drive them to cope with, grow, and learn from stressful and adverse experiences in life and work—so-called positive reintegration. Therefore, resilience metatheory presents a conceptualization of resilience that not only embodies previous conceptualizations, but also identifies the source of resilience as the individual’s spirit, quanta, chi—the inner being of an individual—and, thus, potentially available to all individuals” (p. 701).

From this, the current study theorizes that African American women have innate resilience (King & Ferguson, 2011; Laditka, Murray, & Laditka, 2010). Innate resilience is increased by the influence or the impact of adversities and processes like conceit ceiling practices in the workplace and education. This then lead to positive outcomes like career longevity and professional growth, (Grafton et al., 2010).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) “focuses theoretical attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society” (Creswell, 2007, p.28). This study combined the notions of Black Feminist Theory, CRT, and the Resilience Development Model based on the premises of intersectionality and the documented adversity faced by women of color, particularly black women. Creswell (2007) states that “in the case of Black women, race does not exist outside of gender, and class, and gender does not exist outside of race” (p.28). This research is an undertaking that challenged traditional ideas of Black Female Leaders and that sought to provide advocacy, transformative solutions to American based organizations and the society as a whole (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

### **Definition of the Key Terms**

This section defines key terms, starting with a definition of the population of interest.

**African American women.** The U.S. Census describes “Black or African American” as “a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, & Drewery, 2011, p. 2). For the purpose of this research, Black or African American women are women whose birth origin is the United States of America and who identify as Black (Stanley, 2009). Therefore, within this text, African American women will be used interchangeably with Black women or Black females. Other terms discussed in this paper include leadership, resilience, and organization behavior concepts to include, but not limited to, traditional organizations and glass ceiling.

**Leadership.** Leadership is a phenomenon that has been defined and redefined for decades. Examples of leadership definitions are explored in Hackman & Johnson (2004) and include:

- Peter Northouse’s definition of leadership which suggests that leadership is the ability of one to influence a group to achieve a goal that is universal to the group.
- Gary Yukl’s definition which outlines leadership as a process where an individual influences a group not only towards a common goal but also to the overall success of a group or an organization.
- Afsaneh Nahavandi adds defines leadership by asserting that leadership is not only leading a group or organization by influence but also helping to guide

followers towards individual and organizational effectiveness by way of strategic benchmarks and planning.

- Richard Daft goes further by stating that leadership is not only about an individual that influences a group but also refers to the specific relationship between the leader and the group that inspires change, growth, a purpose toward a specific goal, and responsibility of accomplishment from each individual person.
- Patricia Witherspoon defines organizational leadership behaviors as an “emergence of people working toward a common goal or common interest” (p. 12).

There are hundreds of definitions of leadership, but the common themes of each definition are followers and influence. From this discussion and the various definitions of leadership, leadership style identification emerged in the literature to explain the various perceptions and processes by which leadership is carried out or communicated in organizations and in communities (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Some of these leadership styles are described in Brown et al. (2010, pp. 117-118) and include:

- Authoritarian or Autocratic Leadership: a style of leadership that entails delegation of goals, processes and expectations without input from followers.
- Charismatic Leadership: a style of leadership that employs passion to motivate subordinates toward a common goal.
- Transactional Leadership: a leadership style that depend on the assessment and management of routines and standards in order to accomplish short term goals.

- Participative Leadership: a style of leadership that inspires a group to contribute to the process of leadership in the form of voicing their input and opinions towards a common goal.
- Bureaucratic Leadership: a style of leadership that relies on rules and standards to insure a set pace of work in order to reach group or organizational goals.
- Delegative Leadership: a leadership style that employs trust and the follower's ability to complete tasks. The leader and the employees assess leadership goals together and appoint followers to a specific task according to their ability to reach team goals.
- Situational Leadership: a leadership style that employs judgment dependent upon the circumstances in order to reach specific goals.
- Transformational Leadership: a style of leadership whereby the leader uses vision and passion in order to inspire followers towards a specific goal.
- Servant Leadership: a style of leadership that focuses on service first then leading subsequently in order to reach common goals (Alston, 2005).

For the purpose of this research and for simplification the term leadership will be defined very primitively but take into account the situational occurrences that may alter the meaning of leadership. The Webster dictionary defines leadership as the act of leading a group of people or an organization or the state or position of being a leader (Merriam-Webster, 2013).

**Traditional organization.** A traditional organization refers to organizations that are predominantly White. Based on Black women's origin and social experience,



intersectionality heightens the challenges of leadership roles compared to their counterparts (Crenshaw, 1988, 1994; Hite, 2004; McCall, 2005; Stanley, 2009). Given the dynamics of gender, race, and class in America, Black women are adversely situated in a state of intersectionality, according to Stanley (2009).

**Intersectionality.** Intersectionality describes the combined impact of race, class, and gender that forms the professional and life experiences of Black women who hold positions of authority in traditional organizations (Stanley, 2009). For example, glass ceiling practices become more apparent, thus making career advancement intangible. A *glass ceiling* is an arbitrary limitation or barrier that prevents career growth, despite merit and education (Civil Rights Monitor, 2010). Although all women experience glass ceiling effects in upper level positions, women of color are concerned about and often experience the effects of the concrete ceiling effect (Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009). *Concrete ceiling* effect is used to describe the type of barriers that affect minority women, including Black women (Hite, 2004; Lott 2009). Concrete ceiling is higher level discrimination that causes qualified people to be overlooked for growth opportunities (Lott, 2009). Despite the heightened barriers African American women are making great strides and succeeding as leaders across industries. Again, this study seeks to understand the level of resilience needed to do just that.

**Resilience.** Herrman et al. (2001) define resilience as “positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity” (p. 260). Resilience is studied by researchers of various disciplines ranging from biology to sociology, however, fundamentally the definition of resilience has shifted, across disciplines, from being constrictive to a more broad definition that considers systematic

contributions that influence functionality in adverse circumstances (Grafton et al., 2010; Herrman et al., 2001). For the purpose of this research, resilience is defined by Wagnild and Collins (2009):

Resilience is the ability to adapt or ‘bounce back’ following adversity and challenge and connotes inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity (p. 29).

Wagnild and Collins (2009) also add that adults who are resilient possess the ability to adapt positively to “stress and adversity” (p. 29). Other terms commonly associated with resilience are protective factors and risk factors. The literature review will provide a closer look at both protective factors and risk factors.

### **Key Assumptions**

1. “Glass ceilings” practices exist that prevent seamless elevation in leadership careers for women (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005).
2. These obstacles are heightened to become “concrete ceiling” barriers for African American women.
3. The purpose of this study is to assess the resilience needed to attain retain and maintain higher levels of leadership for the African American female participants. From this, it is assumed that resilience is a factor in their success or adaption of the participants. However, other factors separate from resilience may contribute to their ability to succeed in their careers.

**Study Limitations**

1. Because participants were sought who work in traditionally White, male dominated industries, the generalizability is affected. Other women in high ranking positions may have excelled in industries not categorized as traditionally male dominated.
2. The method section of this study indicates that the participants will be comprised of at least 14 women, who identify as African American and who hold high level appointment within their organizations. This is a small number of participants and may negatively impact the generalizability of the study.
3. The participants of this study are African American; other women are excluded from this study, which may also hinder generalizability of the findings.
4. The researcher's biases may be a factor in the interview procedure process of the study.
5. The method section of the study states that the researcher will employ a mixed-method design in order to engage in the research inquiry. Specifically, the purpose of employing a mixed method approach is to illustrate that resilience is a factor in the positive adaptation/success of the participants. With any method, the research is limited to the purpose, procedure and philosophy of the study (Bazeley, 2004; Creswell & Clark, 2011).

**Outline of the Study**

This is a five Chapter study. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and problem to the reader. It also identifies key ideas on African American women and leaders by presenting the problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical map, key assumptions, limitations,

and definition of key terms. Chapter 2 is a literature review of important areas of study in order to frame together the interrelated concepts. Such areas include resilience, African American women in business and leadership in America, and social-cultural circumstance that shape their experience in leadership and in the workplace. Chapter 3 is the method section of the research. It provides a description of the design identifying how data is collected, analyzed, interrupted, and reported. It also provides a description of the participants, the role of the research and how human subjects are protected. Chapter 4 is articulation of the findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 brings together the previous four chapters by summarizing the study. It provides detailed inferences and recommendations for future research. It is also important to add that there are inspirational phrases and quotes highlighted throughout this paper at the beginning of many of the sections. The purpose of the quotes or phrases is to complement/highlight the main idea of the section.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 is a review of the study. It defines the purpose of the study, identifies both the problem and significance of the research and poses five research questions. Next, key terms are emphasized in order to provide a guide for the remainder of the study. Although many women are excelling in leadership positions, there are documented and clear gender disparities in businesses nationwide. In America, this disparity is said to be greater for women of color, specifically African American women. Subsequently, the goal of empowering women and to provide a guide for future leaders is expressed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 will further define important terms and concepts and provide a review of literature on the topic of resilience, African American female leaders and their success strategies informed by research in the areas of psychology, sociology, biology, cultural and social studies and history, just to name a few.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”- Maya Angelou (Schnall, 2008).

This literature review is organized to provide a systematic understanding of the interrelated facets that affect leadership, success, and resilience of African American female leaders. Major areas of study are included in order to (a) establish a theoretical framework on this topic, (b) describe important language in the study, and (c) engender significance of this study in psychology, biological and human studies, and various cultural and social sciences scholarship (Robinson et al., 2012). The goal is to outline the dynamics of success, resilience and leadership for Black women utilizing numerous methodologies that overlap in the literature yet have significance separately. Moreover, the purpose of the research is to explore those variables that impact success for African American female leaders and to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement, and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership appointments. Therefore, we must first dive into a brief depiction of womanhood and the workforce in America, followed by a review of literature specific to the African American woman's experience. We outline the history of African American women in America with regard to leadership, career advancement, and success within this subgroup. We conclude this review by presenting literature on resilience. Specifically, we identify the characteristics, processes, and innate nature of resilience in people. We also attempt, utilizing the

literature, to link resilience and leadership. Because we ultimately will assess the resilience of the leaders in this study, we also discuss assessment of resilience.

### **Working Women in America**

Patriarchy is still a factor in the lives of women in America (Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2010). Patriarchy is defined as:

Social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; *broadly*: control by men of a disproportionately large share of power (Merriam-Webster, 2013)

Patriarchy shapes the socioeconomic and political realities and norms for women (Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2010). Such social norms place women in a state of servitude or subordination to their male counterparts (Evans, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005). For example, until recently women's work whether paid or unpaid was under documented or considered invaluable because women often were situated in jobs as caregivers, housekeepers or other employment of servitude (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005; Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2010). Consequently, women were economically and socially dependent on the males in their families. Despite this, structural changes in the labor force shifting from manufactory focused to knowledge based as well as globalization (Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2010) has caused consistent growth in women involvement in the workforce. For example, women participation in the workforce grew from approximately 18% in the 1890's to nearly 55% in the 1990's. There hasn't been significant decline in the rate in which women have impacted the workforce since World War II (Levitan & Belous, 1981). Women's participation in the workforce also changed the makeup of families and

communities. For example, the relationship between workforce participation and head of household rates are parallel for women. Meaning, as women took their place in the workforce; they also shifted their positions in their households. Only 1 in 10 households were headed by women in the 1970's. This rate grew to 1 in 7 only 10 years later (Levitan & Belous, 1981). In 2009, nearly 25% of women between the age of 25 and 44 either lived alone or were identified as the head of their household (Women Health USA, 2011). Once considered “invisible” (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005), employed women have moved from service based occupations into management and traditionally male centered occupations. Table 1 illustrates employed women by occupation and race in 2008. Most noticeable, is the percentage of women entering in to male dominated fields like construction and production/transportation. In addition, the percentage of women in management and professional occupations are notable across race and ethnicity.

Table 1

*Employed Women by Occupation and Race*

Occupation	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity
Total, 16 years and over	(54,501)	(8,554)	(3,225)	(8,098)
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Management/ professional/related	40.6	31.3	46.0	23.5
Service	19.3	28.2	19.4	31.3
Sales and office	33.7	31.9	26.1	32.9



Occupation	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity
Natural resources/construction/maintenance	9	7	6	1.7
Production/transportation/material moving	5.4	7.9	7.8	10.6

*Note.* Adapted from Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Work life balance.** When considering the influx of women entering the labor force, one should also consider that the reality the working woman requires a balance. This balance is termed work life balance (WLB) in the literature and has many definitions that vary depending on its operational usage (Reiter, 2007). The controversy around the definition lies in the term balance (Bailey, 2008; Reiter, 2007). In this study we consider the definition presented by Byrne (2005) as defined by The Work Foundation;

“Work life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual’s right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society” (p. 55-56).

Therefore work life balance involve both the employee and the employer generating realistic expectations in adjusting work responsibilities (Maxwell & McDougall, 2004) and life aspects (e.g. household, networks, wellbeing, life and self, Byrne, 2005).

In the workplace women have faced tremendous hardship attempting to find balance. Some of the adversities include stereotypes and gender socializations (Hessi-Biber & Carter, 2005). For example, women face being lumped in either the career primary category (which involves not sacrificing ones career for children or family) or the mommy track (which involves a less demanding work load in consideration of future family or childbearing obligations). The categorical placements pose adversities to women attaining higher positions (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Hessi-Biber & Carter, 2005). Further, social, structural and political realities in America continue to make professional growth and balance difficult for women (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Hessi-Biber & Carter, 2005; Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2010).

Many socioeconomic and political constructs shape the opportunities and realities for women professionally. Examples of these constructs include but are not limited to patriarchy, racism and sexism (Hite, 2004; Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2005; Lott 2009; Peters et al., 2004). Consequently, women have been collectively “underrepresented in the ranks of the rich and powerful” and have little control over work environments (Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2010, p. 1), which impacts the number of women in the workforce, opportunities for women, and their development of leadership practices as well (Iverson & Rosenbluth, 2005; Robbins & Judge, 2011). After World War II, America saw a steady increase in women’s participation in the workforce, including female infiltration in male concentrated occupations like construction, transportation, and management. However, as Table 1 also illustrates, African American women lag behind in all areas compared to their White counterparts. Though significant the collective feats and barriers of women, analyzing and understanding the challenges and experience of

African American women requires a closer look into the cultural reality and life specifics for Black women (Lott, 2009; Robinson et al., 2012; Stanley, 2009).

### **African American Women: The Experience**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century African American women paved the way in leadership in their communities, families, and in business (Brown & Irby, 2010; King & Ferguson, 2011; U.S. Department of State, 2012), serving as “touchstones” for future generations (U.S. Department of State, 2012, p.1). However, their experiences are oppressed or lumped together with those feats and challenges of either White women or that of Black men in the literature (Brown & Irby, 2010; Crenshaw, 1994; McCall, 2005; Stanley, 2009). Black feminist research suggests that it is impossible to grasp a clear understanding of the Black female experience if it is not held separately from their gender and/or ethnic counterparts (Brown & Irby, 2010; Crenshaw, 1994; King & Ferguson, 2011). The current study focuses on women in business, but it is appropriate, in this case, to address those historical experiences that may have not directly manifested in business but proved worthy of the classification “leadership” given that traditional leadership opportunities in certain arenas have been withheld from this subgroup (Allen, 1997; King & Ferguson, 2011). In this section, we will explore the experience of Black women that has shaped their leadership opportunities, feats, and challenges.

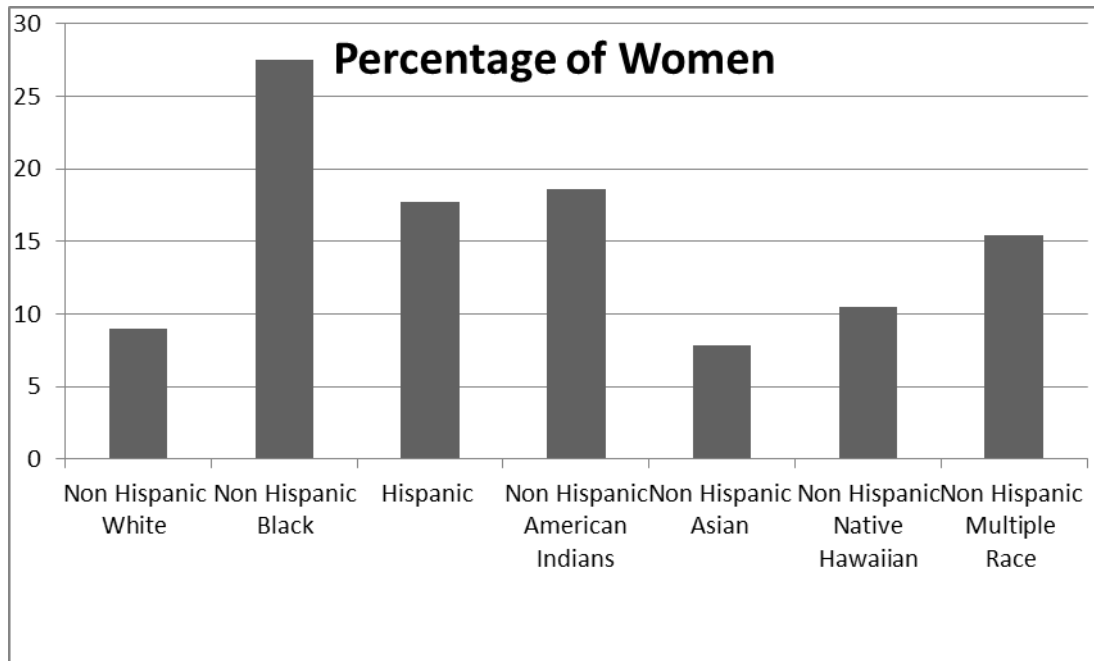
**Oppression.** Black female leadership is under documented because of their “subordinate position” in society (Allen, 1997, p. 1). Slavery, for example, was an institution of injustice for African Americans as a whole, which perpetuated the subordinate position of this group of people. Within the slave community, there were additional systems of patriarchy that added extra hindrance to Black female leaders’

circumstances and identity emergences (Brown & Irby, 2010; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Although slavery was abolished more than a century ago, there are still lasting effects on the state of Black women and their families (Pargas, 2008). The process is formalized by Mays (1985): “The process of slavery and its debilitating effects on the development of a self-identity imposed on the African American presents a unique psychological development that is not comparable with any other group lacking such an experience” (p. 385). For example, scholars credit the preponderance of single mothers in the Black communities to the aftermath of slavery (Robinson et al., 2012). Many circumstances are said to have a relationship to the institution of slavery (Brown & Irby, 2010) including marriage (Pargas, 2008), family formation and structure (Robinson et al., 2012) and leadership identity development (Allen, 1997; King & Ferguson, 2011; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Despite this, during the height of slavery, female leaders emerged in their families and in their communities (Allen, 1997; Brown & Irby, 2010). For example and most notably, Harriet Tubman led between 300-500 slaves to freedom in a course of 19 trips using the Underground Railroad (Brown & Irby, 2010; Green, 1992). Tubman is said to have led a punitive life in slavery and emerged as a leader out of a need for social and communal justice for her people (Brown & Irby, 2010; Green, 1992). Similarly, African American women are said to emerge as leaders in their communities and families out of the need for deliverance from subjugation. Allen (1997) notes that:

Lack of access to traditional sources of power and decision-making forced Black women to find alternative means of leadership in non-traditional arenas and ways (Giles, 1985). Hence, Black female leadership in the United States is a history of

their struggle for liberation from oppression. It is a history of collective struggle to maintain cultural traditions in the Black community through the church (Woodson 1921; Gilkes 1985; Dodson 1988; Blackwell 1991; Billingsley 1992), educational endeavors (Smythe, 1976; Salem 1990; Franklin & Moss 1994), economic enterprise, (Brown, 1988; Blackwell, 1991; Butler, 1991; Horton, 1992) and the family (McAdoo, 1980; Billingsley, 1992, p. 1).

**Family & motherhood.** As stated earlier, slavery and other challenges to self-expression are credited for generations of uncommitted, unconcerned or even invisible or weak men in the institution of family in Black communities (Pargas, 2008; Robinson et al., 2012; Rubin, 1978;), triggering an inclination of families being headed by women (Women's Health USA, 2011) and a visual formation of a matriarchal system within Black families (Chaney, 2011; King & Ferguson, 2011; Pargas, 2008; Rubin, 1978). To illustrate this point, Figure 1 presents families headed by women across race/ethnicity for women who are ages 18 or older in 2009. These Figures represent those households with family members.



*Figure 2.* Head of Household by Race/Ethnicity (2009). Adapted from Women Health USA, 2011.

As illustrated, the propensity of female headed households is higher for African American families (27.5%) compared to other races, including White families (9%) (Women’s Health USA, 2011). Chaney (2011) articulates the interaction between family and African American women as such:

The marginalization of Black women necessitated that these women create a self-defined worldview that would ultimately validate their experiences. As a result, many African American women find a great deal of satisfaction in their familial roles, especially of those as partners, wives and mothers (p. 518).

Chaney asserts that womanhood and motherhood is demonstrated through domestic leadership. Womanhood is demonstrated, at first, in one of two ways, “when a woman first demonstrates her ability to care for her home, and second, when she can take the lead in the absence of male leadership” (p. 524). The influence associated with this role adds past and existing value to both the Black woman’s experience and their impact within

their networks. Specifically, African American women's choices influence both the "historical and contemporary experience" of the African American family (Chaney, 2011, p. 513). Research suggests that the reason for this is that motherhood brings about specific duties including a sense of control, authority, and expressiveness and in turn respect is reciprocated among and between the families for these women (Chaney, 2011), triggering "women centered networks of community-based child care" (King & Ferguson, 2011, p. 217).

Subsequently, family and motherhood is an important arena to evaluate leadership for African American women (Brown et al., 2010; King & Ferguson, 2011). King and Ferguson (2011) assert that the collective stories of Black women provide a clear synopsis of Black womanist leadership. Leadership is traced through a lineage of mother to child, especially mother-daughter, transmissions. From this, King and Ferguson assert that the leadership principles are developed into four interrelated stages and are described as follows:

1. Basic Habilitation: rituals or systems of training through means of care, which include "socialization and knowledge building." Classified as "race work," these happenings result in domestic leadership of the mother and skill building of the child in the areas of self-regulation, personal upkeep and role determination (p. 233).
2. Communal Affiliation and Helping Skills Development: stem from the Afrocentric notion of cooperative work: is based on Afrocentric beliefs of community building and service to the tribe. Learning is universally centered in full observable and hands-on experiences of the follower's environment

including “family, friendship circles, church, service guilds, civic, community and fraternal organizations, and school based service learning opportunities” (p. 234).

3. Work Ethic Cultivation/Vocational Maturity Formation: is the continued skill building and training through adolescent stages of development that both increase the mastery of previous learned skills and reinforce “performance and competence attainment” of new age appropriate skills through modeling and other experiential learning (p. 234).
4. Organizational Citizenship: this stage is cultivating independence and social responsibility instilling skills like work ethic, the nature of “return on investments” and reciprocal relationships as well as leadership skill development and team building skills.

These four stages illustrate an evolution of leadership that is said to provide a means to overcome the challenges and inequities across boundaries for Black women, passed down from mother to child. The study also offers two additional parallel components that lend to the leadership experience of Black women. Those components include both Social Justice Consciousness and Capacities for Resistance, which involve skill building in the area of critical thinking, identity formation, and mobility between cultural and societal constructs that not only hinder or affect self and family, but also the group and/or community.

**Community.** In this section, we discuss the experience of Black women in their social spheres, analyzing both their community and political affiliations. The Black woman’s voice has provided support to communities by inspiring the lives of numerous



families, supporting economic and social justice efforts and preparing future academics (Allen, 1997). Thus, the black woman's challenge in leadership cannot be studied against a White hegemonic construct. Gilligan (1982) suggest that the black female voice has been silenced from the American cultural perspective of leadership. Furthermore, normal literature on leadership tends to quiet the sounds of the Black woman (Collins, 1990). Generalizations of African American women that pigeonhole them into the White, hegemonic, mainstream leadership literature goes against efforts of experiential justice. Therefore, social justice efforts would include an accurate depiction of the Black woman's leadership framework, according to Allen (1997). A working definition for social justice for this discourse comes from Lewis (2001). He argues that social justice is a means of "exploring the social construction of unequal hierarchies, which result in a social group's differential access to power and privilege." To effectively explore issues of social justice, one must engage in the deconstruction of oppression that give power to racism and sexism (Lewis, 2001).

Racism and sexism was at its peak in the 1800's and early 1900's for people of color (Taylor, 1999). By the 1800's, slavery had been around for over 2 centuries and was the driving force of labor. Blacks were exploited and Black women were overlooked even more. For example, during the Women Suffrage Movement (1848-1920), African American women were abused and ignored, only worthy of reduction to most (Allen, 1997). During this time, some Black women found it necessary to take leadership roles in "political resistance" (p.1). For example, Sojourner Truth, an African American feminist and abolitionist, begged the question "ain't I a woman too?" addressing the position of invisibility posed on Black women during a time when woman were fighting collectively

for gender inclusion and enfranchisement (Bennefield, 1999). Setting a standard for Black women, Sojourner Truth is one of the most noted and recognized feminist voices and leaders in race relations, during a time when women were not only considered second to men but when Black people were seen as less than human. Other women like Marla Stewart, Harriet Jacobs, and Frances Harper all followed suit leading African Americans with a vision of equality not only for all men, but for all people (Bennefield, 1999). Nineteen twenty marked the year of enfranchisement for women. Despite the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Black women were still disenfranchised by systematic oppression. It wasn't until the Civil Rights Movement that all Blacks, particularly in the South, were enfranchised (NWHM, 2007).

During the Civil Rights Movement 1950-1980, Black female leadership was vital to social justice. Allen (1997) noted that Black women held historical roles labeled Race women. Race women were charged with community governance, assembly, and coalition and instilling pride in fellow Blacks. Allen coined the title Black female community leadership based on the works of Race women during the Civil Rights period. The exact definition is worded as follows:

the struggle for group survival whereby group collective experience, and group socioemotional supports, as well as the instrumental aspects of developing and maintaining internal female networks for institution building, merge to form collective action for cultural maintenance and Black community empowerment.  
(p. 3).

According to the Associated Press (2005), examples of Black female community leaders include but are not limited to:

- Ella Baker: Led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was a charming servant leader who organized labor issues.
- Septima Poinsette Clark: nicknamed the “queen mother” of the movement was an educator/activist who spearheaded the movement for equality and was a member of the NAACP.
- Fannie Lou Hamer: the co-founder of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party who was abused and incarcerated for registering to vote in 1962. She gave an empowering speech at the Democratic National Convention in 1964.
- Vivian Malone Jones: enrolled at the University of Alabama despite segregation stipulations of Alabama in 1963. She went on to work for the U.S. Justice Department.

Most notably in American history, Rosa Parks became known for the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. She stood up for her personal rights, which translated into an expression of activism for all African Americans during this time period. She would, subsequently, emerge as a leader in the movement for equality.

Rarely acknowledged for their courageous leadership, women of the struggle were often key players in the front for equality and community development. Barnett (1993) articulates the collective experience and struggle of Black female leaders:

The diversity of their experiences is matched only by the diversity of their backgrounds. Sisters in struggle-sharecroppers, domestic and service workers, schoolteachers, college professors, housewives, beauticians, students, and office secretaries-all shed blood, sweat, and tears in the movement. In their homes, churches, voluntary associations, political organizations, women's clubs, college

campus organizations, neighborhoods, and work groups, southern Black women of differing backgrounds shared a common desire for freedom from oppression. They courageously engaged in civil rights struggles in the South, a region historically characterized by a dangerous climate of legalized bigotry, labor exploitation, sexual assault and insult, and institutionalized violence and intimidation (p. 163).

The experience of Black female leaders was shaped by the interrelated reality of race, gender and economic oppression (Barnett, 1993; King & Ferguson, 2011). Often overshadowed by the needs and egocentrism of White women and African American men, Black women reigned as silent or invisible leaders during the 1900's. Despite this, they served as touchstones for future leaders in all arenas including business and education.

**Education.** Like community and social justice movements, Black women have made great strides and overcome barriers in education across the board, as well. Demonstrating that despite circumstances, they can both attain higher education and be successful in leadership positions in the educational arena. For example, in the academic years of 2009-2010, women earned the majority of degrees within each racial/ethnic group at all levels. To illustrate the point Table 2 highlights the number of degrees conferred in the U.S. and highlights women's progress.

Table 2

*Degrees Conferred in the U.S.*

Number of degrees conferred to U.S. residents by degree-granting institutions, Percentage distribution of degrees conferred, and Percentage of degrees conferred to females, by level of degree and race/ethnicity: Academic years 1999–2000 and 2009–10						
Level of degree and race/ethnicity	Number		Percentage distribution		% conferred to females	
	1999–2000	2009–10	1999 2000	2009–10	1999– 2000	2009–10
Associate's	554,845	833,337	100.0	100.0	60.3	62.0
White	408,772	552,863	73.7	66.3	59.8	60.9
Black	60,221	113,905	10.9	13.7	65.2	68.3
Hispanic	51,573	112,211	9.3	13.5	59.4	62.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	27,782	44,021	5.0	5.3	56.8	58.5
American Indian/Alaska Native	6,497	10,337	1.2	1.2	65.8	64.9
Bachelor's	1,198,809	1,602,480	100.0	100.0	57.5	57.4
White	929,106	1,167,499	77.5	72.9	56.6	56.0
Black	108,013	164,844	9.0	10.3	65.7	65.9
Hispanic	75,059	140,316	6.3	8.8	59.6	60.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	77,912	117,422	6.5	7.3	54.0	54.5
American Indian/Alaska Native	8,719	12,399	0.7	0.8	60.3	60.7
Master's	406,761	611,693	100.0	100.0	60.0	62.6
White	324,981	445,038	79.9	72.8	59.6	61.8
Black	36,595	76,458	9.0	12.5	68.2	71.1
Hispanic	19,384	43,535	4.8	7.1	60.1	64.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	23,538	42,072	5.8	7.0	52.0	54.3
American Indian/Alaska Native	2,263	3,960	0.6	0.6	62.7	64.3
Doctor's <sup>1</sup>	106,494	140,505	100.0	100.0	47.0	53.3
White	82,984	104,426	77.9	74.3	45.4	51.4
Black	7,080	10,417	6.6	7.4	61.0	65.2
Hispanic	5,039	8,085	4.7	5.8	48.4	55.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	10,684	16,625	10.0	11.8	48.8	56.5

American Indian/Alaska Native	707	952	0.7	0.7	52.9	54
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*Note.* Adapted from National Center for Education Statistics, 2012.

As you see, Black women received the most degrees conferred at all levels among their counterparts. Specifically, African American women earned 68% of associate's degrees, 66% of bachelor's degrees, 71% of master's degrees, and 65% of all doctoral degrees awarded to Black students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). In addition to education attainment and degree conferment, Black women have positively infiltrated the higher education and education administration arenas.

Currently, Black women represented 32% of collegial presidents of color in 2006 (AACU, 2007). A decade earlier, there were only 49 African American women serving as college and university presidents. There were 4,096 postsecondary institutions (public, nonprofit, and for profit) during the same time period. These women comprised 1.4% of all college presidents, about 8% of all woman presidents, and about a quarter of all African American presidents. The majority (55%) headed junior and community colleges. The rest were at state university campuses or Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Only one president served at a prestigious institution, and she headed a woman's college. Table 3 highlights the percentage of presidents by race and gender in both 2006 and 1986.

Table 3

*Percentages of College Presidents by Race/Gender*

Categories	2006	1986
African American		
Women	32.0	7.4

Men	68.0	92.6
Categories	2006	1986
White		
Women	22.0	9.3
Men	78.0	90.7

*Note.* Adapted from Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007.

Table 3 illustrates a clear disparity even today. Though the number of African American female presidents is still quite small, their numbers are increasing steadily and have more than doubled in the last decade (AACU, 2007). Studying these women provides a way to explore how race and gender may interact in the area of leadership and grants an illustration of the Black female leadership experience. As heads of educational institutions, they can shed light on how they perceive leadership.

Parallel to the understanding of leadership in the broader sense, the normal understanding of female leaders in education has been constructed, and theorized from a White hegemonic female perspective, like many frameworks of leadership. Because of the male dominated managerial customs that exist in the workplace, females have experienced obstacles to leadership in education, particularly Black women. Some mainstream White female scholars like Bensimon (1989) suggest that the feminist perspective is not recognized in academia with regard to leadership theory. She suggests that leadership experiences are generalized and the leadership discussion appears androcentric in nature. Bensimon goes on to assert that leadership theories do not take into account that women experience the social world differently than their male

counterparts and that this translates into a specific yet different epistemology, ethic and leadership experience. Additionally, Black women, on the other hand, experience the world of educational leadership differently than White females, as well.

For example, Alston (2005) sampled Black female leaders who serve as superintendents. Superintendents are high ranking leaders of educational administration. While in this role, the leaders face many challenges including stereotypes, heightened discrimination driven by intersectionality, and the binary effects of activism and work role known as tempered radicalism. Given these challenges Black female leaders, in these superintendent positions, exceed expectations, are productive, and thrive in their jobs. Factors that influence success in Black female leaders are their commitment to service and their experience in leadership (i.e. the experience gained through various life circumstances, Alston, 2005) In general, Alston found that although Black female leaders make up a small percentage of the superintendents in the education field, their collective successes suggest that their leadership style can lead to developing an effective organizational framework.

### **Servant Leadership**

Women have been cited in literature, as having transformational leadership styles (Robbins & Judge, 2011). African American female leaders have been cited to have both transformation and servant leadership characteristics depending on the author (Brown et al., 2010; King & Ferguson, 2011). Although some research cautions against mistaking servant leadership qualities for the Black female leadership (Brown et al., 2010; Dobbs et al., 2008), there are studies that suggest that Black female leaders are situated socially, spiritually, emotionally, and ethnically in a place where they must rely on those very



leadership qualities to survive, sustain, and grow (Armstrong, 2007; Bass, 2009; King & Ferguson, 2011; Washington, 2006).

Because traditional forms of leadership were denied to African Americans and even more so to Black females, servant leaders manifested among African American women in community and families, according to King and Ferguson (2011). King and Ferguson assert that for Black women “service is the rent we pay for living” (p.11). This notion leads to the need to discuss servant leadership further.

According to Greenleaf (1977) a servant leader is not only dedicated to service intrinsically but their followers perceive them as a servant first then a leader. Greenleaf discusses the story of Leo in *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, whereby Leo is described as a servant leader who is a chief at all times because his primary purpose is to serve. In this story, he describes a servant leader as someone who is proven both competent and trustworthy for followership and who is not afraid to stand for causes against injustices. A key distinguishing characteristic of a servant-leader is that the primary goal is that he/she focuses on people as the higher priority. Whereas leader-first approach, seeks to adhere to organizational or self-imposed goals that hold higher priority to service. Additionally, servant leadership entail a natural ambition to serve. Servant leaders are great listeners; they are extremely empathic and wise to the importance of “a little silence” (p. 17). The most clear and concise definition of servant leadership that Greenleaf offers is:

The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.

That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of

the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possession. For such it will be a later choice to serve-after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature (p. 13).

Overtime, leadership styles, including servant leadership, have been debated, some even redefined and additional styles added to the list including pacesetter leadership and laissez-fair leadership (Hamilton & Bean, 2005). Current research on servant leadership style utilizes Greenleaf's (1977) characteristics of a servant leader, which includes being imaginative, creative, intuitive, accepting, a forward thinker, persuasive, action orientated, theoretical, sometimes situational, relative to communities for which they serve, and trustworthy as a basis for examination.

Some of the leadership style characteristics overlap. Most apparent is the similarities between transformational leadership and servant leadership. Specifically, both leadership styles employ passion, collective vision, goal attainment, and the ability to exude commonality among and between followers (Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009). However, the characteristics that separate servant leaders from transformational leaders are highlighted in

Table 4

*Servant and Transformation leadership Characteristics*

Servant Leadership	Transformational Leadership
1. Moral Orientated	Vision Orientated
2. Aspire to the goal of the people/followers	Aspire to collective goals of the organization

3. Focus: needs of the followers	Focus: needs of the governing body
4. Motives: individual growth	Motives: organizational growth
Servant Leadership	Transformational Leadership
5. Development: desire to develop autonomous leaders based on individual consciousness	Development: desire to develop followers that are similar to themselves with the organizational goals in mind
6. Influence: Utilizes service to influence (i.e. leader by example attitude).	Influence: Utilizes charisma in order to influence followership

Parolini, Patterson, & Winston (2009)

From this, one can assert that the transformational leader is a leader-first and a servant as a result of his/her leadership authority. Greenleaf (1977) describes this type of leader as inferior to a servant leader:

Servant-leaders are functionally superior because they are closer to the ground- they hear things, see things, know things and their intuitive insight is exceptional. Because of this they are dependable and trusted, they know the meaning of that line from Shakespeare's sonnet: "They that have power to hurt and will do none..." (p. 42).

Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, and Jinks (2007) reinforce Greenleaf's notion of the servant leader being superior leader by examining servant leadership practices of public school leaders in five leadership areas including their ability to challenge, inspire, enable, model and encourage effectiveness using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Self-assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP) . The study found that

compared to non-servant leaders (i.e. those leaders who demonstrated traditional (i.e. top down) or non-servant qualities), servant leaders were perceived as more effective leaders in all five areas of leadership.

In attempting to understand gender differences and servant leadership, Fridell, Belcher and Messner (2009), compared servant leadership and traditional leadership. For the purposes of the study, traditional leadership was defined as a hierarchal (i.e. top down) style of leadership. Uniquely enough, this research assesses the leadership paradigms by separating participants by gender. Specifically, the research sought to assess servant leadership style differences between men and women. Findings from both a 40-item and 20-item survey identified clear differences between male and female servant leaders. The findings indicated that both male and female leaders refrain from using traditional leadership styles based on the type of work/organization they represent (i.e. school). The research also found that unlike male leaders who identified as servant leaders, female servant leaders utilized four principles of servant leadership more than their male counterparts. The principles include, “daily reflections, consensus building, healing relationships, and drive sense of self-worth” (p. 733). Fridell et al. suggested that this finding identified the significant principles that separate female servant leaders. The findings highlighted principles female leaders are more prone to value and use, exhibiting servant leadership than their male counterparts.

Like Greenleaf (1977) and Taylor et al. (2007), Whetstone (2002) found that servant leadership was most appropriate in modern organizations. Utilizing a social science perspective, the study analyzed leadership in a qualitative- comparative nature. Specifically, Whetstone used personalism (i.e. “views of persons and personal

relationship”) as a lens for the analysis (p. 385). As such, Whetstone found that compared to both transformational leadership and postindustrial leadership, servant leadership was more effective in organizations that relied on social interaction and human capital for effectiveness. For example, the study asserts that although transformational leaders succeed at creating fellowship for a specific vision, this type of leadership style falls short because it is misleading or offers “bogus empowerment” (p. 387). Bogus empowerment refers to the process of alienation whereby the leaders declare the employee power without granting or developing the moral relationship needed to enhance the leader/follower relationship. Whetstone also explains that postindustrial leadership (i.e. a style of leadership that focuses on the relationship between the leader and the follower while emphasizing the importance of influence) lacks the personalism to understand the value of the individual. The study inferred that although servant leadership is criticized for various reasons including the leader’s tendency to become overly positive, unrealistic and also the general negative connotations of “servant,” it was the most consistent with the five elements of personalism including centrality of the person, subjectivity and autonomy, human dignity, the person within community, and participation and solidarity (p. 386). Contrary to research on servant leadership, the study concluded by suggesting that a truly effective leader could inherently utilize those altruistic qualities of a servant leader while leaning on the “superior behavior characteristics” (i.e. “developing a vision,” including others, nurturing partnership, developing followers, planning for incremental success, “linking rewards to performance, and celebrating accomplishments”) of transformational leadership (p. 391).

Some argue that the good leadership qualities of servant leadership do not translate into productivity or performance. However, Hamilton and Bean (2005) provided a qualitative analysis of leadership utilizing a social and contextual lens. The organization that provided the contextual framework is Synovus Financial Corporation. Unlike most studies of servant leadership, Hamilton and Bean were able to find parallels between organizational productivity and servant leadership in a finance based organization. Specifically, the research separated training geared towards leadership development in order to provide a clear framework for training based on the needs of the organization. In this case, leader development focused on individual development of competences and leadership development focused on the social and relational qualities needed for a leader to maneuver in specific interpersonal situations. In doing so, Hamilton and Bean found that servant leadership and effective leadership were “synonymous” in this particular organization (p.344).

Similar to Parolini et al. (2009), Taylor et al. (2007), Hamilton and Bean (2005) and Greenleaf (1977), Sendjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008) suggest that servant leadership is the most appropriate and effective leadership style in modern organizations. Specifically, Sendjaya et al. compared transformational, authentic, spiritual and servant leadership styles. The research pointed out that transformational leadership and servant leadership styles share the tendency to empower followers. However, the motives behind empowering vary. Specifically, the servant leaders desire to empower followers toward autonomy and success for the greater good of the individual, compared to the transformational leader who empowers followers so that they are sold to the vision of the governing body. Similarly, authentic and servant leadership styles share characteristics

like the consciousness of morals, self-awareness and regulations and the ability to focus on the follower. However the two styles differ in that servant leadership gives emphasis to spirituality orientation, which provides a foundation for motivation in the followers (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Sendjaya et al. also describe the similarities between the servant leader and the spiritual leader, suggesting that although the servant leader emphasizes spirituality as a basis for motivation, unlike the spiritual leader, the servant leader is more able to “unconditionally” accept others despite contrary spiritual beliefs (p. 405). In addition to a comparative analysis of the four leadership styles, Sendjaya et al. also combined a qualitative and quantitative analysis using both the Servant Leadership Questionnaire and the Servant Shepherd Leadership Scale to analyze servant leadership qualities in participants based on six dimensions of servant leadership including (a) voluntary subordination (i.e. “being a servant and acts of service”), (b) authentic self (i.e. “humility, integrity, accountability, security, and vulnerability”), (c) covenantal relationship (i.e. “acceptance, availability, equality, and collaboration”), (d) responsible morality (i.e. “moral reasoning and moral action”), (e) transcendental spirituality (i.e. “religiousness, interconnectedness, sense of mission, and wholeness”), and (f) transforming influence (i.e. “vision, modeling, mentoring, trust and empowerment,” p. 409). The purpose of the study was to validate the measurement tool of servant leadership, based on the six dimensions. As such, the study found that the six characteristics of servant leadership provide a consistent and valid framework for measuring and assessing servant leadership, suggesting that generally servant leaders have such qualities (i.e. voluntary subordination, authentic self, conventional relationship,

reasonable morality, transcendental spirituality, and transformational influence). Thus, implying that the servant leader is well-rounded compared to their counterparts.

Mayer, Bardes, and Piccolo (2008) analyzed servant leadership based on both the followers' needs, and job satisfaction from an organizational justice perspective. The purpose of the study was to link servant leadership to the followers' needs and job satisfaction. Utilizing a multidimensional approach consisting of both qualitative and quantitative measures, the study found that there is a clear link between followers' needs satisfaction and job satisfaction and servant leadership style, suggesting that servant leadership is effective in organizations (Mayer et al., 2008).

Walumbwa, Hartnell, and Oke (2010) tested servant leadership from both a social exchange theory (i.e. relationships that functions through informal reciprocal expectations) and social learning theory (i.e. learning by way of modeling "attractive and creditable" examples). Specifically, the study tested the influence of servant leadership on employee attitudes (i.e. "self-efficacy and commitment to the supervisor") and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB, p. 519). According to Walumbwa et al. OCB describes the behaviors of employees/followers that are not directly acknowledged in a "formal reward system," but that do motivate organizational effectiveness (p. 519). From this exploration, the study concluded that servant leadership does influence commitment. For example, servant leaders invest in their followers (i.e. holistic development) and promote inclusiveness by encouraging participation in important decision making processes. In addition, the study found that servant leadership style behaviors influenced an increase in the followers' self-efficacy compared to other styles of leadership, including transformational leadership. Because the interpersonal skills and behaviors



applied in servant leadership, followers are motivated to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities in order to promote success based in part on both the aspects of social learning and those of social exchange theory. The study also provided some indication that servant leadership is transferable across cultures in this framework.

Schaubroeck, Simon, Lam, and Peng (2011) examined both servant leadership and transformational leadership behaviors through two levels of trust in order to gauge team performance (i.e. effectiveness, team strength, communication, creativity, increase connection among and between group members, and productivity). The dimensions of trust included cognitive based trust (i.e. refers to the trust in performance and competences including “responsibility, reliability, and dependability) and affective based trust (i.e. refers to interpersonal connections between people that are genuinely grounded in self-care of others, p. 2). Using both qualitative and quantitative measures, the study found that the transformational leaders’ influence team outcomes through cognitive-based trust and servant leaders’ influence team output through both affect-based trust and variables of group safety. As such, servant leadership impacted team performance at a higher level (10% of the variance) than transformational leadership. Combining knowledge from other leadership research, Schaubroeck et al. suggested that although both servant leadership and transformational leadership behaviors positively affect team performance, servant leadership provides additional influences due to the interpersonal value of the leadership styles. Interesting enough, the research was conducted using participants of a financial based organization that relied on team performance for effectiveness.

From the literature on servant leadership, one can argue that this leadership style is superior to the other leadership styles (e.g. charismatic, transformational, ethical and spiritual, just to name a few) for various reasons (Hamilton & Bean, 2005; Mayer et al., 2008; Parolini et al., 2009; Sendaya et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2007) including the notion that a servant leader places service and the wellbeing and development of the followers at the center of the leadership style. Employee satisfaction, productivity, team potency, increased employee citizenship behaviors, and improved employee performance, have all been linked to the behaviors and qualities of servant leadership (Mayer et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Walumbwa, et al., 2010). Because servant leadership has been researched utilizing various scopes and in multiple organizational settings, one can also assert that servant leadership is applicable across cultures, organizations and genders (Fridell et al., 2009; Mayer et al., 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2010). However, servant leadership is criticized for the very reason it is held at such high regard (Walumbwa et al., 2010; Whetstone, 2002). Some suggest that a leader can't be a servant while simultaneously applying effective leadership behaviors and practices (Whetstone, 2002). From this, there are some pros and cons of servant leadership pointed out in the literature. For example Table 5 illustrates the pros and cons of servant leadership.

Table 5

*Servant Leadership: Pros v. Cons*

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
1. Empathic	May not work in every context
2. Forward thinker	Over optimism
3. Community builder	“Encourages passivity”

4. Trust worthy	May influence manipulative behaviors in followers
5. Persuasive/ transforming abilities	May encourage misguided causes
<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
/motivator	

*Note.* Adapted from Whetstone, 2002; Greenleaf, 1997; Walumbwa et al., 2010.

Although this is not an exhaustive list of qualities of servant leadership, it provides a foundation for understanding both sides of the fence in assessing the style validity in organizations and across genders and race. Specific to this research, understanding the dynamics of servant leadership provides a foundation in attempting to evaluate those characteristics in Black female leaders

There are a limited number of studies that aim to explain Black female leadership as it relates to style development or leadership style application (Alston, 2005; Hite, 2004; King & Ferguson, 2011; Stanley, 2009). Brown et al. (2010) discuss success and Black female leadership as it relates to “winning” and “playing the power game” in corporate America. The literature suggests that applying one leadership style is not beneficial when establishing your leadership foundation in an organization. The book also offers several “laws” for success that contradict servant leadership practices. For example, Brown et al. suggest that applying moral concepts in the corporate arena can be dangerous for the Black female leader. The authors also explicitly suggest that African American women should avoid being perceived as “Mammy”. Instead, offering a tactic consistent with a competitive or a self-serving spirit. The authors also warn against making friends and trusting people, which directly contradicts the premises of servant

leadership. Some other interesting “best practices” the authors offer for developing successful Black female leaders, but that are inconsistent with servant leadership include:

- Be aggressive in getting your point across
- Demand respect
- Lean away from emotional connections or actions
- Not to undermine your own value
- Staying away from fundamental spiritual values

Brown et al. (2010), also offer some leadership “best practices” that are consistent with servant leadership characteristics including staying positive, encouraging self-awareness, forward thinking as a strategy, and building positive connections with peers and subordinates. Despite the minimal overlap of the best practices and those qualities of servant leadership, Brown et al. “laws of success” contradict the usage of servant leadership, because the very foundation of servant leadership is cautioned (i.e. placing the followers in front of self – having a commitment to serve that drives leadership practices). Based on the research, there is a clear need to highlight positive qualities and behaviors of Black female leaders. Some qualities associated with women and leadership include being empathic, persuasive, having problems solving skills driven by team building and inclusive leadership, and risk taking (Lowen, 2011). Research suggests that women are more able to lead toward a vision, compared to their male counterparts (Hite, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2011). These qualities overlap with those qualities of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Mayer et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008)

Accounting for the experience and social standing of Black female leaders, additional qualities are added to the list including:

- Ethic of care describes the act of rectifying injustices, driven by genuine care and interest for the people and the situation which is a foundational quality of servant leadership (Armstrong, 2007; Bass, 2009).
- Situation of Struggle: race and gender relations make Black women sensitive and compassionate about global and individual issues (Armstrong, 2007).
- Internal drive/awareness/empowerment (Armstrong, 2007).
- Connection to Spirituality (Armstrong, 2007; Bass, 2009; Washington, 2006).

When aligned with those qualities of servant leadership, it is clear that Black female leadership style and servant leadership style overlap (Greenleaf, 1977; King & Ferguson, 2011; Mayer et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008;). Table 6 illustrates the intersection of the two styles.

Table 6

*Black Female Leaders v. Servant Leadership*

<u>Black Female Leaders: Qualities</u>	<u>Servant Leadership: Characteristic</u>
Natural situational norms in society place women in a place of subordination; intersectionality of Black women leaders allow for them to embrace secondary stance for the good of the followers; “ethic of care” (Peters et al., 2004; Washington, 2006; Armstrong 2007; Bass, 2009)	voluntary subordination (i.e. “being a servant and acts of service,” Sendjaya, et al., 2008, p. 409)
Internal drive/awareness; authenticity; situation in struggle promotes realistic acceptance of self and of others (Armstrong, 2007; Dobbs et al. (2008).	authentic self (i.e. “humility, integrity, accountability, security, and vulnerability,” Sendjaya, et al., 2008, p. 409)
Situation in struggle makes Black female open to people (Armstrong, 2007); ethic of care (Bass, 2009); empathic and promotes relatatableness among followers(Lowen, 2011)	covenantal relationship (i.e. “acceptance, availability, equality, and collaboration,” Sendjaya, et al., 2008, p. 409)
Connection to Spirituality (Washington,	responsible morality (i.e. “moral reasoning

2006; Armstrong, 2007; Bass, 2009). Connection to Spirituality (Washington, 2006; Armstrong, 2007; Bass, 2009). Black women attain success by intersecting their spirituality into leadership (Armstrong, <u>Black Female Leaders: Qualities</u> 2007).	and moral action”, Sendjaya, et al., 2008, p. 409) transcendental spirituality (i.e. “religiousness, interconnectedness, sense of mission, and wholeness,” Sendjaya, et al., 2008, p. 409) <u>Servant Leadership: Characteristic</u>
Persuasive, problems solving skills driven by team building and inclusive leadership, and risk takers (Lowen, 2011).	transforming influence (i.e. “vision, modeling, mentoring, trust and empowerment,” Sendjaya, et al., 2008, p. 409)

In addition to these qualities, Washington (2006) point out that Black female leaders have a connection to servitude driven by the nurturer within. This claim is in line with those assertions of Bass (2009), Byrd (2009), and King and Ferguson (2011). Regardless of the leadership style Black women have made notable strides in traditional and nontraditional leadership roles. The next section discusses notable Black female leaders.

### **Notable African American Women in Business & Leadership**

There was a time when traditional leadership roles were solely associated with males, and women only perpetuated supportive or domestic roles (Bailyn, 2008; Peters et al., 2004). Today, African American women make up a small percentage of leaders in Fortune 500 companies (Wolfe, 2010). They are still experiencing “firsts” in typical male dominated industries, yet their collective results indicate that their leadership is productive (Alston, 2005; Byrd, 2009; Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009).

According to the Society of Marketing Professionals (SMPS) women of color are a driving force in the national employment market and workforce (Bollinger, 2008):

Nearly 10.4 million women-owned businesses generated \$1.9 trillion in sales and employed 12.8 million people. Of those firms, 2.4 million are owned 50% or more by women of color, employing 1.6 million people and generating nearly \$230 billion in sales annually (p. 1).

This data illustrates the value and influence women continue to have in the country and in business. Despite this, women still have hardships while trying to establish themselves in the corporate arena. There have been some notable contributors who beat the odds, overcame barriers and made their mark in business and leadership. Below is a list developed by the U.S. Department of State (2012), Bureau of International Information Programs also known as the BIIP titled *Making their Mark: Black Women Leaders*.

- Madam C. J. Walker: Born in a time when slavery was still in effect, Madam Walker was born Sarah Breedlove, a free woman in 1867. In a time when African American women were denied the right to vote, Madam C.J. Walker became the CEO of her very own hair care and cosmetics line. This venture launched her into the realms of other self-made American millionaires. Even as a wealthy woman, Walker struggled to be heard in the political and business front of her male counterparts.
- Ida B. Wells-Barnett: Fought for social, gender, and racial justice in a time when such acts were frowned upon. She walked aside male leaders like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. She was not afraid to stand up for what she believed in such as the women's suffrage movement in 1913.

- Elizabeth Alexander: She is a Yale graduate, a poet, and social activist. She was invited by President Obama to read her work at his inauguration ceremony. Her accomplishments are plenty, and include a poem collection that gives voice to African American people.
- Mary McLeod Bethune: is an educator and civil rights advocate. A first generation freed from slavery, Mrs. Bethune is known for leading the National Association of Colored Women and was a member of Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet." Black Cabinet is defined as "a coalition of African-American leaders which advised the Roosevelt administration on issues affecting African Americans and their advancement" (p. 13).
- Ursula Burns: the first African American woman to head a fortune 500 company. Known for strong leadership practices, her quotes are: "I am known for being frank and speaking my mind", "Circumstances don't define anyone" and "The critical component [of success] is the alignment of people around a common set of objectives. Diversity is a key factor to this strategy. I truly am my race and my gender. There is no denying either. They define my heritage" (p. 13).
- Shirley Chisholm: was the first African American woman elected to U.S. Congress and ran for the Democratic presidential race in 1972. She is known from shouting "unbought and unbossed." which is significant because she stood for racial and gender independence (p. 14). She called her defeat at the presidency a "needed catalyst for change" and is quoted as saying, "You don't make progress by standing on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining. You



make progress by implementing ideas. I don't measure America by its achievement but by its potential" (p. 14).

- Johnnetta Cole: is an educator and one of the first women to head a prestigious college, Spellman College. She is known for her hard work, dedication and leadership in academia and in her community.
- Catherine Hughes: is the first African American woman to own a publically traded company in the U.S. She is the chairwoman of the U.S. Small Business Administration Council on Underserved Communities and is also committed to creating viable networks for African American women in business.
- Mae Jemison: In 1992, she became the first African American woman to travel to space. Her quotes are as follows: "When I grew up, in the 1960s the only American astronauts were men. Looking out the window of that space shuttle, I thought if that little girl growing up in Chicago could see her older self now, she would have a huge grin on her face" (p. 15).
- Lynn Nottage: a graduate from Brown and Yale Universities. Nottage is an acclaimed writer concerned particularly with social issues. Her interests included Black women and women affected by violence. While conducting research on victims of violence she stated "I thought I was going to find broken women, but I found women who had been brutalized but were determined to move on" (p. 16). She is an advocate for women's issues.
- Condoleezza Rice: was the first African American woman appointed to Secretary of State under President Bush. She is known for crediting her success to her parents. Rice's quotes on leadership and circumstance include: "the

importance of leaders to stand for the proposition that every man, woman, and child deserves to live in freedom,”; “they refused to allow the limits and injustices of their time to limit our horizons” (p. 16).

- Susan E. Rice: working at the United Nations and as an Ambassador in President Obama’s Administration, Rice is an advocate for education, social justice and human rights. She has a Doctoral degree and is a Rhodes Scholar. She is known for the following quote: “My big conclusion about how to live one’s professional life is to do what you *want* to do as opposed to what someone tells you what you *ought* to do. If you’re excited about something and passionate about it, that’s what you ought to do” (p. 17).
- Leah Ward Sears: Sears is the first woman appointed to Georgia Supreme Court. She has been first in many arenas in her professional career. Her statement regarding being first is as follows: “Being the first was always a little difficult. I had to fight to be accepted. I didn’t do it by having a chip on my shoulder; I just worked hard” (p. 17).

More than half of the Black female leaders mentioned above credit their successes to either their determination to overcome adversity and/or the support of their parents. King and Ferguson (2011) stress that Black female leaders will credit their successes to their parents or highlight their mothers as essential role models in their lives. In many ways these notable women in history are “othermothers” to future leaders. “Womanism, termed by a woman of African descent, connotes the uniqueness of feminism among women of color and stresses the mothers/othermothers who act as mentors for other, usually younger, women” (p. 72). These women serve as “touchstones” for future women

leaders and make their marks in American history despite their individual and collective hardships. Although each story holds separate significance, their collective feats, voices, and challenges lend to a wide ranging depiction of talent, energy, leadership and resilience (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

### **Recent Trends: The Process of Adapting**

Trends in America reflect the statistical representation of the population and provide a clear synopsis of the realities therein. African Americans represent approximately 12% of the total population in the U.S. There are disparities across the board among this population of people. African American trends in health, education, and income are disproportionately disadvantageous relative to their counterparts and are not reflective of the population trends. Trends among African American women vary and confirm disparities in both education and income as well. Some of which are highlighted below:

***Education.*** Research shows a clear association between parent education and child outcomes. According to the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center (2010), African Americans also disproportionately attend urban schools and 54% grow up in female headed households. In 2008, 13% of Black children were raised with parents who have less than high school education. This rate was nearly twice as high a decade prior. Between 1997 and 2007, the dropout rate decreased for African Americans peaking at only 13%. Although there are clear disparities for African Americans with regard to education, gender differences exist within the group. Despite the biases and discrimination experienced by Black women, they earn more than half of the associate, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees

conferred to all African American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). However, many of the degrees are conferred in majors that are not very lucrative in earnings, like social services and education fields. Nonetheless, the increase in educational attainment for African Americans, especially Black females, indicates consistent trends in adaptation to popular demands of American society.

***Income.*** In the third quarter of 2012, African American women earned only 82% of the weekly earnings of their White counterparts (BLS, 2009). Table 5 illustrates both the earnings and the employment rates in 2009. Both indicate that African American women close out the rear in income and employment.

***Poverty.*** The technical definition of poverty is described in terms of income thresholds with no regard to non-monetary benefits based on factors related to living need (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008b). Social welfare policy refers to poverty as “the economic condition of being without enough basic resources” (Sega & Brzuzy, 1998, p. 78). African American people had the highest poverty rates compared to other groups. Table 7 shows the rates in 2007. Black women have significantly higher poverty rates. According to the Center for American Poverty (CAP, 2012), Black women have the highest rate of poverty among other subgroups of men and women, including White and Hispanic men and women.

Table 7

*Poverty in 2007*

All Person in US	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Asians
12.5% (37.3 million people)	8.2%	24.5%	21.5%	10.2%

US Census Bureau, 2008a.

***Socioeconomic Status.*** Socioeconomic status, for the purpose of this paper, will be defined as it is by Adler et al. (1994), which states that the professional, academic levels, and earnings from sustaining gainful employment can represent socioeconomic status (Garvin & Tropman, 2000). Socioeconomic status has direct effects on the wellbeing of the people of ethnic groups. When the socioeconomic state of particular ethnic groups fluctuate, so will the wellbeing of members of these groups, in terms of their education, birthrate, family and living structure, mortality rate, health status etc., thereby affecting the cultural and social features of the systems. Even though it seems that the socioeconomic statuses of minority ethnic groups have increased, they still fall behind their White counterparts tremendously, this is particularly true for Black women (Aponte & Wohl, 2000; CAP, 2012; Garvin & Tropman, 2000). Table 8 illustrates the disparity by highlighting income and employment by race in 2009. As you can see Black women close out the rear.

Table 8

*Income and Employment by Race*

Race	Income (median weekly earnings 2009)	% Employed (2009)
African American Women	\$582	51.7
White –Non Hispanic Women	\$669	53.6
African American Men	\$621	53.1
White Non-Hispanic Males	\$845	63.7

United States Census Bureau, 2010

Education poverty, income, and socioeconomic status are predictors of health outcomes, interpersonal stability (Cutrona, Russell, Burzette, Wesner, & Bryant, 2011), marital status (Robinson et al., 2012), opportunity, and career advancement, (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2011), just to name a few. Although education attainment seems to be on the rise for Black women, the growth trend in education is not parallel to the trends in career growth and opportunity. This is apparently, because women as a whole are stagnated in middle management positions (Solis & Hall, 2009). This is contrary to popular belief that education attainment and hard work will remedy the gender gap in the workforce.

**Intersectionality**

These trends indicate disparity as recent as the 21<sup>st</sup> century for African American females. Research indicates that the effects of race, sex, and economic conditions add additional barriers for Black women. The term for this situated inequality is intersectionality. The term is a feminist-sociological term coined by Crenshaw in 1988.

Specifically, intersectionality refers to the inferior position for which women of color experience common life manifestations given interconnected socioeconomic variables (Crenshaw, 1988, 1994; McCall, 2005; Stanley, 2009). Since its emergence, researchers have struggled to simplify, clarify, and complicate the methodology (McCall, 2005). Nonetheless and simply put, “intersectionality is a paradigm that provides a framework to consider the multiple social dimensions African American women are situated in given their unique, unequivocal, innate circumstances of being not only non-White female, but also non-male Blacks” (Robinson et al., 2012, p. 2). To illustrate the point, Table 10 outlines the disparities in income and employment. Despite their collective career and educational growth, this group still closes out the rear in earning, employment, and leadership positions compared to other subgroups, only having attained one CEO spot in America to date. This categorical analysis provides a visual and applicable analysis on the relationship of equality between the subgroups (McCall, 2005). Subgroups are not fixed but the depiction illustrates the disparity Black women experience across subgroups and between frames.

In America, education advancement and career growth predicts success in leadership. However, recognizable social and cultural factors situate Black women in a state of inequality with regard to leadership. For example, Americans as a whole have seen growth in areas of education, as noted in the trend section, previously. Specifically, from 1972 to 2008 school enrollment and completion rates increased for all Americans, across all spectrums and levels of education (USBLS, 2011). According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report, women outnumber men in both enrollment and graduation rates in America. African American women headed the group in graduate education attainment

and enrollment. In addition to becoming more educated, Black women held over 30% of professional middle management positions in the U.S in 2009 (Solis & Hall, 2009).

Despite making great strides in education and career growth, Black women continue to experience disparity in earnings, employment and leadership opportunities (Dobbs et al., 2008; USBLS, 2011; USDL, 2009), also illustrated in the trend section of this literature review. The sociological and feminist term, intersectionality, is an appropriate classification in this sense, as well. Studies credit intersectionality for the situated state of inequality experienced by African American women, despite their efforts toward advancement (Crenshaw, 1994; McCall, 2005; Stanley, 2009). This study recognizes and appreciates intersectionality as a factor that contributes to the inequality that Black women experience with regard to leadership. To further evaluate the experience of Black women, this study takes an in depth look at the barriers to owning, attaining and sustaining leadership in the workplace for Black women.

### **Understanding the Barriers in the Workplace**

King & Ferguson (2011) emphasize that Black women not only face barriers while in leadership position but also struggle with initially “owning their influence and accomplishments as leaders.” This is directly associated with conventional forms of “socialization and the large looming social forces” (p. 5). As a result, Black female leaders were classified as invisible or emergent leaders out of a need to uplift their people, as opposed to being identified as self-actualized, expressed leaders. Self-actualized or expressed leaders are generally associated with male leadership (Barnett, 1993; King & Ferguson, 2011). Barriers, according to King & Ferguson, to Black women claiming their leadership styles, positions and even identities include the following:



- **Gendered Projections:** perceptions of female leaders include tough, masculine, and conformant to gender roles of women in the workplace. Even in leadership position women are seen as easily manipulated and “puppets” to male dominates.
- **Cultural and Racial Projections:** societal predictions that are caused by systematic racism. Within the race, clear gender divides stipulate women’s roles in society, subsequently placing them in domestic or caregiving positions. Stepping up to traditionally male positions of leadership increases the risk that the projections that Black women will be seen as overshadowing Black men and thus creating a matriarchal system which prevents male leadership in family, community and in society, will come to fruition.
- **Negative Perception of Leadership:** female leaders are positioned on either end of a spectrum. One end is being militant and the other being overly heartfelt. In addition, negative projections include uppity or not in their place, for women who attain leadership appointments.
- **Socialization to Deny or Downplay One’s Contribution:** based on traditional expectations and coaching, Black women rarely accept thanks, praise and leadership appointments. The reluctance to accept leadership roles and accomplishments is linked to doubt about one’s worthiness. Moreover, black women are trained to consider the collective contributions of the group as opposed to sole input of one person. Consequently, Black women often establish leadership positions. However, those positions are “behind the scenes” as opposed to outright (p. 6).

- Contradictions between Terminology and Action: The dichotomy between terminology and action is dictated by history and social injustices. These contrasts downplay leadership roles assumed by the minority groups in order to perpetuate oppression. For example, normal leadership roles are associated with White males. However Black women partake in various leadership roles in order to sustain, survive and uplift. Thus the terms, leader or leadership are linked directly to the existence of power, which mitigates the validity of Black female leadership.

Given these barriers there is no wonder that women of color are disproportionately represented in leadership roles across the board including higher level executives in corporate, finance and other industries (Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009; Stanley, 2009). Although Black women are qualified and exceed expectations in middle management positions, women of color experience organizational and social barriers that hinder their ability to attain leadership positions (Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009; King & Ferguson, 2011). Of the African American people employed, women account for 31% in middle level positions, and there has only been one African American female CEO out of 15 female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (Wolfe, 2010). Because of this disparity, there is limited research on the Black female leader's professional experience as it relates to the organizational and career development aspects of executive leadership in business. Further, the barriers, leadership styles, perceived and tangible opportunities, and the organizational and social impact of Black female leaders lack in-depth examination (Stanley, 2009). Given the incremental growth of women in advanced leadership positions, specifically women of color, organizations should understand the dynamics of

the Black female leader's professional experience and those barriers they withstand during the rise to the top.

Noted earlier, social norms place women in subordinate roles in comparison to males in society. These social norms have situated women in a place of servitude for centuries (Peters et al., 2004; Robinson, 1983). Specific to Black female social roles, Peters et al. (2004) and Robinson (1983) highlight that African American women face similar social barriers at a higher level given additional societal hardships driven by racism. Consistent with the assertions of King and Ferguson (2011), the study implies that social norms, perceptions and status are shared across race, but specific to gender. This leads to women's avoidance of leadership roles in their communities and in organizations despite their abilities. Although the research reinforces the notion of male leadership dominance in our society, it also highlights women in a position of servitude only elevating the need to assess the Black female experience further.

Hite (2004) studied the experience of both Black and White female managers and their perceptions of their access to higher level career opportunities as well as their overall experience as managers. The research sought to unravel the underlying myth that all women, regardless of ethnicity, experience similar barriers in the workplace with regards to upward mobility. The research discusses the dualism at work for women of color who experience biases and/or setbacks based on not only gender but also race. Specifically, Hite examined the hiring, promotion, salary, mentorship opportunities, the assignments and acknowledgment components of the female managers; seeking to identify the underlying barriers of professional growth that demonstrate clear and profound differences in the experience of female managers of color, specifically that of

African American female managers. The study sampled women in management positions from various industries and organizations across the United States. The results of the study affirm that there are still underlying disparities of perceptions of accessibility and career growth between White male and female workers and women of color. Specifically, White male and female managers perceived that in many ways women of color have the same career opportunities available to them as everyone else. Nonetheless, Black female respondents alleged that women of color have fewer promotional opportunities, fewer opportunities for alternative assignments, lower promotion opportunities and access to mentors and a lower salary than their White male and female counterparts. These factors negatively impact the experience and motivation of employees. The study also mentions that although all women experience glass ceiling effects in upper level positions, women of color are concerned about and often experience the effects of the concrete ceiling effect. Concrete ceiling effect is used to describe the type of barrier that affects minority women, including Black women (Hite, 2004; Lott 2009). Concrete ceiling is higher level discrimination that causes qualified people to be overlooked for growth opportunities (Lott, 2009). Overall, Hite's study highlights that racial differences are highly ignored or unnoticed by White males and females. However, Black women are fully aware of the disparities in regard to race and gender and their growth potential within organizations. Negative perceptions can impact the organizational structure (Robbins & Judge, 2010). This study reaffirms the need to examine the Black female experience while in management and leadership positions, in order to develop cutting edge management and organizational practices that will serve the needs of the contemporary workforce (i.e. primarily minorities and women of color).

Dobbs et al. (2008) explored perceptions and stereotypes that hinder the African American female experience in the workplace in regards to acquiring and retaining leadership positions, and their perception of their career development opportunities while in those positions. Similar to Hite (2004), Dobbs et al. mention that women of color experience many barriers in the workplace including the concrete ceiling effect, gender stereotypes, and the negative stereotypes of professional Black women. Despite that, Black women hold the majority of corporate leadership positions among women of color and acquire more doctoral degrees compared to other women of color. Stereotypes like Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, Crazy Black Bitch, and Superwomen still have profound effects on African American females' outcomes in the workplace, despite their acquired professional and academic qualifications (Dobbs et al., 2008). Below are definitions each stereotypical image as defined by Dobbs et al. (p. 136):

- Mammy: Motherly, loyal, self-sacrificing, servant, nurturing
- Jezebel: Seductive, flirty, promiscuous, hypersexual, manipulative
- Sapphire: Loud, overly assertive, talkative, dramatic, bossy, angry, wisecracking, complainer
- Crazy Black Bitch : Crazy, unstable, angry, vindictive, aggressive, defensive, untrusting of others
- Superwoman: Overachiever, intelligent, articulate, professional, assertive

Black female professionals who experience hardships driven by these stereotypes feel limited in both their potential for career advancement and their ability to demonstrate their leadership capabilities. These limitations often translate into poor performance. The study goes even further, suggesting that these stereotypes could negatively impact

the Black professional female's, personality, self-esteem, and well-being. Similar to Hite (2004), Dobbs et al. (2008) suggest that organizations should not perpetuate these stereotypes by limiting leadership opportunities to White men; especially since women in general are becoming more knowledgeable, cutting edge and have acquired higher academic value than their male counterparts. All of which translate into higher organizational performance. Further, Dobbs et al. assert that despite these stereotypes, Black female leaders can overcome the affects of these labels by having a good work life balance, understanding their own authentic leadership style and value, setting tangible standards of success without limiting themselves, and using these perceptions for the greater good of minority women.

Bass (2009) combined the topics of leadership and African American women by decoding the underlying principle of the "Mammy" stereotype, exploring in detail their "ethic of care" in leadership from the view of Black female leaders. Ethic of care describes the act of rectifying injustices, driven by genuine care and interest for the situation. Bass interviewed five women who hold various leadership positions within education administration. Findings indicate that driven by their connection to community and oppression, African American female leaders often unconsciously take on causes that will decrease injustices and provide a pillar for the women behind them. This ethic of care often perpetuates the idea behind the "Mammy" stereotype. The female leaders often demonstrate an ethic of care without considering personal consequences.

Implications for Human Resource Development (HRD) include, organizations adapting to the influx of diversity within the workforce by developing this idea of "ethic of care" into a comprehensive mentorship opportunity for women of color, including Black

female leaders. This will help minimize the negative effects of the Mammy stereotype, while encouraging Black female leaders to continue to care and give back within their realm of authority.

Again, Byrd (2009) investigated the experience of African American female leaders by examining 10 African American women who work in predominantly White organizations but hold advanced leadership positions including Chief Information Officer, Executive Director, Senior Manager, and Vice-President to name a few. Like Hite (2004) and Dobbs et al. (2008), Byrd found that the Black female leadership experience includes limited access to advancement opportunities despite qualifications, as well as a constant struggle with overcoming stereotypes. The study only confirmed that Black female leaders do experience racism, sexism, and classism on their quest to lead. Additionally, Byrd found that the sample of professional women overcame these barriers by staying focused on their goals and remaining true to themselves. The findings suggest that organizations must acquire resources and tools that will continually promote diversity from the top down. In addition, human resource development aspects related to addressing race, gender and class have to be developed and applied in contemporary organizations.

Stanley (2009) suggests that the problem in the field of HRD is that organizations are not equipped to address issues of the growing workforce of women and minorities. The purpose of HRD is to enhance human proficiency and the “learning and performance” of staff within an organization; however HRD lacks the theoretical understanding of the intersectionality of minorities, especially Black women. This is an issue, because intersectionality shapes the everyday work and social experience of Black

women. In that, organizations must invest in reshaping organizational structures and practices in order to address the needs of their employees (Stanley, 2009).

### **Success Strategies & Resilience Characteristics**

Hackman and Johnson (2004) suggest that in order to narrow the leadership gap and promote diversity; organizations must employ organizational strategies that will systematically promote the advancement of female leaders. For example, companies can bridge the gap by “aggressive recruitment, greater accountability for developing female leaders, formulation of advocacy groups, mentorship, and executive development programs” (p.306). Success strategies for African American women include mentorship, education in the form of both academic and career development and commitment to success.

***Mentorship.*** Mentorship opportunities must be available in order to encourage female leadership development and to narrow the leader gap between men and women (Bass, 2009; Brown et al., 2010; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). For information purposes, a mentor is entrusted with the educational and professional development of the mentee. Comparably, a sponsor is an ambassador for the protégés’ career advancement. The sponsor has the networks to help facilitate advancement within particular industries (Brown et al., 2010; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Research suggests that one individual could have both roles of mentor and sponsor (Brown et al., 2010; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Research on African American leadership indicates that African American women should and have actively sought out mentorship from those women before them (King & Ferguson, 2011). Brown et al. (2010) coin the process as “Seek wisdom from my elders”



(p. 56). This means that the best learning tool is those learned lessons from those before us.

***Career development.*** As mentioned previously, education is one of the cornerstones to career development in American (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Black women have made a mark in education, as highlighted in the *Education* section above. In addition, to formal education, Brown et al. (2010) suggest that one of the laws for leadership for Black women is partaking in informal continual education efforts. For Black female leaders' career development is a lifelong process that involves learning your industry and maintaining your seat at the table in business (Brown et al., 2010).

***Commitment & spirituality.*** Alston (2005) sampled Black female leaders who serve as superintendents. While in this role, the leaders faced many barriers including stereotypes, heightened discrimination driven by intersectionality. Given these challenges Black female leaders, in these superintendent positions, exceed expectations, are productive, and thrive in their jobs. Factors that influence success in Black female leaders are their commitment to service and their experience in leadership (i.e. the experience gained through various life circumstances).

King & Ferguson (2011), assert that Black female leaders are not only driven by commitment but also by spirituality:

Many West African cultural traditions, attitudes, and behaviors were preserved by our foremothers in the lives of the enslaved in the United States. Jules-Rosette (1980) for example, identified six distinctive features of West African spirituality incorporated into the religious practices of African Americans, presumably passed down by African American women who were the caretakers of spirituality. Even

if African American families are not actively involved in a particular church, their religious heritage will probably shape their beliefs and values (p. 38).

Their collective spirituality is passed down from mothers to children and is a fundamental driver in the lived experiences of Black female leaders. This otherworldliness is a manifestation from ancestry rooted in Africa. Otherworldliness or spirituality lend to family structure and cultural beliefs as well. Accordingly, “Such legacies of Black history and African cultural derivatives may have afforded African American women some degree of resilience that some European Americans women may lack” (King & Ferguson, 2011, p. 39). The next section draws on the study of resilience in order to provide a clear understanding of the process of adaptation to adversity.

### **Understanding Resilience: The Development Model**

Developing resiliency requires that you pay attention to the complexities of your experiences, listen to your emotions, and be willing to learn from disappointment as well as success (Pully & Wakefield, 2001, p. 7).

This research is informed by a framework that identifies three waves of academic study on resilience (Grafton et al., 2010; Masten & Obradovic, 2002; Richardson, 2002).

1. Character traits associated with resilience (Glantz & Johnson, 2002; Grafton et al., 2010; Richardson, 2002; Wagnild & Collins, 2009).
2. Processes that positively impact the ability to bounce back from adversity (Grafton et al., 2010; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011; Richardson, 2002; Shih, 2004; Wagnild & Collins, 2009).
3. Resilience as an innate manifestation activated by the uncontrollable social or environmental circumstances or conditions (Grafton et al., 2010; Johnson &

Wiechelt, 2004; Laditka et al., 2010; Richardson, 2002; Wagnild & Collins, 2009).

The definition has been defined and redefined causing debate amongst theorists (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004; Masten & Obradovic, 2002; Smith et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, resilience is referred to as the ability to not only overcome “bounce back from” hardship or adversity (Smith et al., 2008; Wagnild & Collins, 2009) but to also experience positive outcomes despite those circumstances (Gillespie, Chaboyer, & Wallis, 2007; Grafton et al., 2010; Herrman et al., 2001; Pully & Wakefield, 2001; Wagnild & Collins, 2009).

***Traits associated with resilience.*** Early studies identified both mental and social factors that perpetuated positive outcomes despite socioeconomic adversity (Werner & Smith, 1982). Over time, studies on resilience have emerged solidifying a consistent trend of characteristics associated with resilience (Masten & Obradovic, 2002) and aligning those attribute to protective factors (Grafton et al., 2010). Protective factors are defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) as:

...conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that, when present, mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families.

The list of characteristics includes but is not limited to flexibility, willingness to learn, a general attitude of hopefulness, strength and courage (Pully & Wakefield, 2001), tolerance, hardiness, faith, a sense of humor, self-efficacy, self-esteem (Grafton et al., 2010), general locus of control (Baron, Scuello, Veyzer, & Lieberman, 1996), forgiveness, a sense of purpose, spirituality, consistency, logical, ethical (Wagnild &

Collins, 2009), committed and possessing a general sense that change is normal (Glantz & Johnson, 2002). Characteristics of resilience are not strictly set and may depend on the nature of the research and participants therein (Grafton et al., 2010). This first upsurge of research was phenomenological in nature (Richardson, 2002) and geared toward describing the identifiers of resilience and the behavioral markers that heightened adaptation (Masten & Obradovic, 2002). The second wave sought to understand how resiliency assets are acquired (Grafton et al., 2010). Specifically, the second phase sought to understand the process of moving from adversity to adaptation (Grafton et al., 2010; Masten & Obradovic, 2002; Richardson, 2002).

***Resilience as a process.*** Again, the first wave of research on resiliency identified traits of resilience, while the second wave of studies sought to conceptualize how these qualities were developed (Grafton et al., 2010; Luthar et al., 2000; Richardson, 2002), a procedure that is still underway (Masten & Obradovic, 2002). Grafton et al. (2010) describe the second phase of research as attempting to understand the “dynamic process” of resilience (p. 700), which is in essence a coping process (Richardson, 2002). This process is contingent upon two major conditions (Luthar et al., 2000). The conditions are as follows: (a) must experience hardship, change or presented with opportunity (Richardson, 2002) and (b) in spite of the threats/shifts to the developmental process, positive adaption occurs (Luthar et al., 2000). Education and clinical psychology purport this process as linear such that biopsychospiritual homeostasis is disrupted signaling responses that would ultimately lead to homeostasis or dysfunction. Influences contributing to this process are said to include conscious or unconscious decision making, protective factors and reintegration (Richardson, 2002). Biopsychospiritual homeostasis

refers to the state of normalcy for individuals and groups. When biopsychospiritual homeostasis is disrupted the person or group will first make an unconscious or conscious (based on developed protective factors from past disruptions or new information) choice to reintegrate (i.e. the experience of insight or growth from the distortions to the process, Richardson, 2002). This process is said to be made complex or articulated differently amongst theorists, however the process is in essence two fold to include both disruption and end in adaptation (Grafton et al., 2010; Richardson, 2002). For example, Galli & Vealey (2008) assert that theorists of the process wave appreciate three dimensions of resilience to include resistance, recovery and reconfiguration.

Resistance refers to being undisturbed by adversity, while recovery refers to being disturbed by adversity but eventually returning to prestress levels of functioning.

Reconfiguration refers to being disturbed and not simply returning to prestress levels of functioning, but adopting a new worldview because of adversity. The new worldview may be either more or less adaptive than the previous worldview (p. 317).

People or groups can negatively reintegrate or reconfigure as well, relying on disruptive behavior and/or substances that are atypical or dangerous. Process theorists appreciate that this model is one that is the simplest, because multiple disruptions can occur in the life span of people or groups and that some people are predisposed to reintegrate to certain situations. This predisposition or genetic drive sets the ground for the third wave of research on resilience (Richardson, 2002).

***Innate life forces & resilience.*** The third movement on the topic deals with resilience as an innate force and attempts to understand the source of resilience in people

(Grafton et al., 2010). Studies on resilience emerged from child and adolescent psychology and education (Masten & Obradovic, 2002), prevailing from the in-depth longitudinal research on children with unforeseen circumstances conducted by Werner and her colleagues (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004; Rickwood, Roberts, Batten, Marshall, & Massie, 2004). Subsequent studies that appreciate the innate nature of resilience assert that resilience is an ordinary manifestation of adaption that is driven by the systematic human abilities of the communities, families, and individuals directly affected (Grafton et al., 2010; Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004; Masten & Obradovic, 2002). This wave of study also appreciates that certain risk factors (Engle, Castle, & Menon, 1996) activate the spirit, energy or force within an individuals or group that enables the individual or group to adapt (Grafton et al., 2010).

For example, Laditka et al. (2010) studied survivors of hurricane Katrina by assessing the interrelated effects of race and gender. They found that predispositions related to race and gender stimulated instinctive abilities that were vital in softening the impact of hurricane Katrina on African American women compared to other women and to that of men. The research suggests that seemingly negative circumstances prevailing in the lives of these women far prior to the tragedy strengthen their innate adaptive abilities. Otherwise, these women may not have experienced their collective outcome after the hardship .

Laditka et al. (2010) conducted a group analysis, Eisold (2005) individualized resilience by studying a 24 year old African American woman who was routinely abused sexually, mentally and physically as a child. Normalcy for her was far from normal compared to that of other children. During her assessment Rita's (the patient)

circumstances required strength such that it was surprising she was sustaining mentally, physically and emotionally. Eisold believed that this coping was due primarily to her instinctive assets. Specifically, Eisold holds that characterized traits are “insufficient to explain the ways in which resilient children organize the multitude of factors in their lives in order to sustain hope” (p.412). Despite her circumstances, Rita built “lifelong” undeniable resilience given certain protective factors and the “physiological mechanisms” that people possess at infancy. The mechanisms shaped her ability to adapt in her chaotic environments.

Prior to these scholarships, Werner and Smith (1982) found that the majority of the children they studied ended up with unforeseen issues given their hardship and that the resilient children represented only one third of the group studied. Walker et al. (2011) also identified predispositions or risk factors (i.e. malnutrition, infectious diseases, environmental toxins, disabilities, and psychosocial factors like maternal depression, exposure to violence, and institutionalization) in early childhood that perpetuate cycles of dysfunction in communities and hinder normal trajectories in individuals. Although some individuals tapped into the innate forces in order to overcome risk factors (Masten & Obrodovic, 2002), others may experience delay biologically, emotionally, and behaviorally (Walker et al., 2011). For example, Walker et al. assert that:

Inequalities in low-income and middle-income countries are established in early childhood and contribute to lifetime differences. Accumulated developmental deficits in early childhood place children on a lower lifetime trajectory with negative implications for adult cognitive and psychological functioning,

educational attainment, and subsequent income, thus contributing to continued inequalities in the next generation.

Clearly there are issues, gaps and controversy in the study of resilience (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004; Masten & Obradovic, 2002). Despite this Masten and Obradovic (2002) optimizes the potential to move toward new ideas in the study. Specifically, they theorized that there is a movement toward solidifying the connection between neurological and biological premises that promote behavior adaptation. However, they also appreciate the consistency in the current waves of study. Specifically, stating that the “Recurring attributes of person, relationships, and context emerge as predictors or correlates of resilience across diverse situations, implicating a “short list” of probable and rather general factors associated with good adaptation or recovery during or following significant adversity” (p. 21).

This consistency provides a foundation for progressive research and evidence of universal human adaptive systems that are vital to resilience. Other studies of resilience go beyond defining and assessing resilience by coupling resilience with analyzing particular situations or variables like race and education (O’ Connor, 2002; Speed, 2011), substance abuse (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004), survivors (Baron et al., 1996; Laditka et al., 2010), sports (Galli & Vealey, 2008) and careers or roles (Goethals, 2005; Grafton et al., 2010; Reivich et al., 2011), for example. For the purpose of this research, literature on career and academic resilience as well as leadership will be analyzed.

***Career resilience.*** Literature on resilience is concerned with assessing why or how, despite circumstances, people adapt and others don’t and what qualities set those people/groups who do adapt apart (Baron et al., 1996; Galli & Vealey, 2008; Goethals,



2005; Grafton et al., 2010; Laditka et al., 2010; O'Connor, 2002; Reivich et al., 2011; Speed, 2011), including the research on career resilience (Rickwood et al., 2004). From this, theorists assert that certain occupations require a level of resilience in order to maintain (Galli & Vealey, 2008; Goethals, 2005; Grafton et al., 2010), because of the nature of the work, level of stress presented, the work environment, or interpersonal variables required for the role (Galli & Vealey, 2008; Goethals, 2005; Grafton et al., 2010). Other research holds that certain people excel in situations that are dire to others because of resiliency, taking into account both innate forces and learned behaviors (Grafton et al., 2010; Speed, 2011).

To illustrate this point, Rickwood et al. (2004) studied career resiliency in order to develop a career development model for career counselors. The study stressed the need to understand the past trend of the employee-employer relationship that stipulated a long term commitment despite various work conditions and the new state of employment relationships that are not characterized by length of employment but by change. The research draws parallels between resilience and career development by basing the career development model on Richardson's (2002) model of resilience. He asserts that career resiliency is both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature and depends upon various interrelated factors however common themes include adaptability, tenacity driven by passion "heart," process focused, continued learning and social support.

Grafton et al. (2010) studied oncology nurses, specifically analyzing the dichotomy between job satisfaction and the high stress nature of work for nurses. He uses resilience research to assert that innate resilience and processes that strengthen resilience are key to coping in high stress work environments.

Similarly, Galli and Vealey (2008) found that innate resources, sociocultural influences, and adversity gradually lead to adaptation. Further, that resilient qualities are useful in coping but the process that includes the integration between those variables are more important to positive outcomes given adversities associated with athletic roles.

Goethals (2005) assessed higher order political roles, specifically analyzing presidential leadership. He found that resilience plays a part in having positive outcomes on a broad level. Specifically, noting administrative resilience as a key factor in succeeding in the role of president. Thereby affirming research on resilience (Galli & Vealey, 2008; Laditka et al., 2010; Rickwood et al., 2004; Speed, 2011) that hold that social support, sociocultural influences, and the “process” are key factors in positive outcomes and adaptation.

***Resilience & leadership.*** The vast majority of research on resilience focuses on psychosocial deficits or predispositions that are determinates of child and adolescent adaptive qualities (Speed, 2011), very few linking leadership and resilience. Despite this, Pully and Wakefield (2001) assert that possessing or developing resilience is the key to being a leader, because change is inevitable and therefore so is adaptation. Additionally, increased adversity and hardships directly affect leadership development influencing both learning and positive adaptive qualities in over 30% of the leaders who were surveyed. With this in mind, it is important to understand the intersection of leadership and resilience and the process of adaptation as it relates to being a leader.

Leadership is described as the action of leading a group of people or an organization or the state or position of being a leader. Characteristics of sound leadership include but are not limited to authenticity, openness, competent, intelligent, forward-

thinking, courageous, fair-minded and broad-minded, as well as straightforward and imaginative. Many of these characteristics overlap with those traits of resilience including but not limited to courage, honesty and competence. Pully and Wakefield (2001) assert that as a leader you must have resilience or develop resilient qualities in order to be successful. In that, resilience is one of the key components of sound leadership as is intelligence, authenticity, consistency etc., according to Pully & Wakefield. Processes in nine interrelated areas guide leaders in building resilience. The nine areas include “acceptance of change, continuous learning, self-empowerment, sense of purpose, personal identity, personal and professional networks, reflection, skill shifting, and your relationship with money” (p. 9). Many of these same processes have been identified in research on leadership as key factors to success for leaders (Alston, 2005; Dobbs et al., 2008; Robbins & Judge, 2011; Ruderman & Ohlott, 2002), yet are not specifically recognized or lined to resilience or processes that build resilience.

*Assessing resilience.* Defining and operationalizing resilience varies across studies (Smith et al., 2008), therefore research on assessing resilience is limited (Wagnild & Collins, 2009). To add to the body of work, Wagnild and Collins (2009) studied aging adults and presented a two part assessment framework for resilience. The framework included the Resilience Scale and open ended questions intended to prompt reflection of the participant’s resilience. The Resilience Scale is reported to have a reliability coefficient of .88. The scale is used in populations of middle to older age adults. Possible scores can fall between 25 and 175 with a score of below 121 indicating low resilience, 121-146 signifying moderate resilience and scores over 146 are indicative of high resilience. Resilience factors are positively related to the ability to cope and are

negatively related to depression and the participant's perception of stress. Also vital to the Resilience Scale is the open-ended portion of the framework. This portion assesses resilience in five essential areas meaningful life (purpose), perseverance, self-reliance, equanimity and finally coming home to you (existential aloneness).

Smith et al. (2008) presents a resilience scale that assesses the ability to bounce back utilizing a 6 item scale entitled the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). As indicated by its title, the BRS includes fewer items in order to narrow the assessment of resilience to solely the ability to bounce back removing those psychological and health related factors assessed by other scales. The BRS has a reliability coefficient of above .83 and is scored on a 5 point scale (Smith, Tooley, Christopher, & Kay, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). The items of the BRS, according to Smith et al. is presented in Table 9 include:

Table 9

*Brief Resilience Scale Items*

<u>Item Number</u>	<u>Item</u>
1.	I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.
2.	I have a hard time making it through stressful events
3.	It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event
4.	It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens
5.	I usually come through difficult times with little trouble
6.	I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life

The questions of the BRS are designed in a way that the first three items are positively presented and the last three are negatively worded in order to capture resilience despite positive or negative perceptions associated with it.

Other resilience scales include the Ego Resilience Scale (ERS) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC, Smith et al., 2008). The ERS was developed in order to assess the ability to return to character homeostasis after stressors have passed (Block & Kerman, 1996; Letzring, Black, & Funder, 2004; Smith et al., 2008;). The ERS contains 14- item and is scored on a 4 point scale. The items, according to Block and Kerman, 1996, p. 352) include:

1. I am generous with my friends.
2. I quickly get over and recover from being startled.
3. I enjoy dealing with new and unusual situations.
4. I usually succeed in making a favorable impression on people.
5. I enjoy trying new foods I have never tasted before.
6. I am regarded as a very energetic person.
7. I like to take different paths to familiar places.
8. I am more curious than most people.
9. Most of the people I meet are likeable.
10. I usually think carefully about something before acting.
11. I like to do new and different things.
12. My daily life is full of things that keep me interested.
13. I would be willing to describe myself as a pretty "strong" personality.
14. I get over my anger at someone reasonably quickly.

The BRS and the ERS both assess the ability to bounce back, however the ERS is designed to assess the personality characteristics associated with balancing the demand of both internal and external needs (Block & Kerman, 1996; Smith et al., 2008; Smith et al.,

2010). Additionally, the ERS is primarily used to assess ego-resilience in adolescents (Block & Kerman, 1996).

The CD-RISC was designed to assess “personal characteristics that embody resilience” (Smith et al., 2008, p. 195). It is a 25 item scale similar to that of the Resilience Scale prescribed by Wagnild & Collins (2009). The items are on a 5 point measure, comparable to the BRS (Smith et al., 2008). However, instead of using a strongly agree or disagree format, the CD-RISC utilizes a true or not true format, as follows “not true at all (0), rarely true (1), sometimes true (2), often true (3), and true nearly all of the time (4)” (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 78). The reliability coefficient is .89. The scale assesses the ability to adapt among and between participants despite their demographic, environmental and individual differences (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The 25 items on the scale are presented below as used in Connor and Davidson (2003, p. 78):

1. Able to adapt to change
2. Close and secure relationships
3. Sometimes fate or God can help
4. Can deal with whatever comes
5. Past success gives confidence for new challenge
6. See the humorous side of things
7. Coping with stress strengthens
8. Tend to bounce back after illness or hardship
9. Things happen for a reason
10. Best effort no matter what
11. You can achieve your goals

12. When things look hopeless, I don't give up
13. Know where to turn for help
14. Under pressure, focus and think clearly
15. Prefer to take the lead in problem solving
16. Not easily discouraged by failure
17. Think of self as strong person
18. Make unpopular or difficult decisions
19. Can handle unpleasant feelings
20. Have to act on a hunch
21. Strong sense of purpose
22. In control of your life
23. I like challenges
24. You work to attain your goals
25. Pride in your achievements

Resilience is the positive adaptation to adversity. The resilience development model, characteristics of resiliencies, resilience as a process, assessing resilience, and the various waves of studies on resilience all lend to the importance of adaptation in an every changing world. More specifically, it highlights the need to further to study of resilience, linking it to leadership and specific subgroups of leaders, particularly African American women.

### **Summary**

Women only perpetuated supportive or domestic roles not too long ago in America (Bailyn, 2008; Peters et al., 2004). A trend of female workers entering the

workforce and women of color acquiring professional and academic experience has changed the makeup of the American workforce. Specifically, African American women represent a substantial portion of people in the workforce. Among women, African American women acquire over 30% of college degrees (Solis & Hall, 2009). Although Black women are qualified and exceed expectations in management positions, women of color experience organizational and social barriers that hinder their ability to attain leadership positions (Hite, 2004; Lott 2009). Such limitations include stereotypes, concrete ceiling practices, minimal opportunities for mentorship and biases based on the Black women's intersectionality.

Contemporary organizations are becoming more diverse (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Subsequently, the social and organizational norms for leadership are shifting. Opportunities for Black female leaders are diversifying, as well. As the environmental and organizational framework change, so should practices that limit opportunities for Black women.

This discussion brings light to the fact that there are still injustices that hinder opportunity for minorities in contemporary organizations. Robbins and Judge (2011) and Stanley (2009) explain how injustices deter positive organizational structure and human relations, which has huge implications to HRD. Black women make up a small percentage of leaders and are still experiencing "first" in typical male dominated industries (e.g. the first woman CEO). Despite this, their collective results indicate that their leadership is productive (Alston, 2005; Byrd, 2009; Hite, 2004; Lott, 2009; Wolfe, 2010). Thus, further studies on the Black female leader would positively lend to organizational, social, and leadership theory and practice.



This section provided comprehensive literature review of the factors that contribute to the Black female leader's experiences. The goal was to outline the dynamics of success, resilience and leadership for Black females exploring several methodologies that overlap in the literature yet have importance separately. Moreover, the purpose of the research is to explore those variables that impact success for African American female leaders and to identify those factors that impact leadership, increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership positions. Chapter 3 will draw from this literature review in order to provide an outline of the research method proposed to further this study.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed”- 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

#### **Introduction**

There is no doubt that the African American women’s experience and their intersectionality heighten barriers to both claiming and holding leadership positions. Despite this, Black female leaders excel in leadership positions and continue to stride in hardship. Research suggests that their ability to bounce back and succeed despite adversity is related to resilience. The goal of this study was to connect Black female leadership to resilience by identifying the barriers to success, the success strategies, assessing leadership characteristics and their level resilience. This chapter describes the method and the reasoning for the processes selected.

This study assessed resilience in African American females who held higher level positions of leadership in traditionally White, male dominated businesses. The purpose of the research was to determine those factors that increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented adversities associated with African American women, who wish to attain and hold leadership appointments. The goal of this research was twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership positions. Secondly, to provide a map of the success, advancement and resilience of the African American women in order to provide an outline for organizational approaches that are purposed to encourage diversity and development for female leaders.

**Restatement of Research Questions**

In order to explore the gravity of the problem faced by African American female leaders and the factors that influence their success despite such hardships, the study explored the following questions:

1. What are the leadership characteristics of Black female leaders?
2. What are the assumptions of these leaders with regard to their followers?
3. How do these leaders view the role of women in leadership?
4. What barriers to career success do African American female leaders report as having to overcome?
5. How do African American women overcome barriers to career success?
6. What are the factors required to retain career success?
7. What level of resilience is needed in such leadership positions in order to succeed?

Incremental shift in research on resilience illustrates a move to include both qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Wagnild & Collins, 2009). The new wave of research commonly used relies on a resilience scale coupled with open ended questions, in order to gain a quantitative perspective of resilience. This was an exploratory study expanding on the limited amount of research linking Black female leaders to resilience. The hypothesis was there is a difference in resilience for African American leaders compared to the general population of people having taken the particular resilience scale. The dependent variable in this case was resilience. The independent variable was a categorical group, specifically the African American leaders' group mean.

**Description of Research Design**

As stated in chapter one, the study was informed by Black feminist research inquiry and scholarship in the area leadership and resilience. Research in Black feminist inquiry (King & Ferguson, 2011), leadership (Antonokis, Donovan, Pillai, Pellegrini, & Rossomme, 2003), and resilience (Richardson, 2002) have been predominately qualitative in nature.

**Qualitative research.** Qualitative research is used to explore a concept or phenomenon that includes variables that are unknown (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) explains that there are four characteristics of a qualitative research problem. The four characteristics are as follows:

1. The concept is undeveloped or underdeveloped due to the lack of preceding research or theory.
2. The current theories are either inappropriate or incorrect, which could include biased inclinations or inaccurate assumptions.
3. There is a need to develop or further explore an occurrence or to advance the theory.
4. The nature of the phenomena is not fitting for quantative inquiry.

As described in chapter 1, the present study fits all four of Creswell's (2009) characteristics of a qualitative research problem. For example, the research on Black female leadership is underdeveloped and there is a need to explore their leadership further. Additionally, leadership theory is grounded in the White male leadership perspectives and/or lump all women into one group. According to King and Ferguson

(2011), exploration of Black female leadership and leaders is fitting of qualitative inquiry.

**Mixed method research.** Because of the complexity of this exploration, the researcher employed a mixed method design. Mixed method design “employs either the qualitative or the quantitative approach (or some combination).” Further, the “emphasis might tip in the direction of either quantitative or qualitative research.” The present study leaned heavily on qualitative exploration for three reasons. First, the unit of analysis was African American women. According to King and Ferguson (2011) it is important for women, particularly African American women, to understand their life story and experiences through the eyes of those women before them. Therefore, it was vital to explore the leadership successes, barriers and experience of African American female leaders in a way that gives light to the story given the collective marginalization of this group of women (Creswell, 2009; King & Ferguson, 2011). Again, the goal of this research was to provide a guide for women who aspire towards entering particular fields and holding executive leadership positions in traditional male dominated organizations and to provide a map of the success, advancement and resiliency for African American women in order to provide outline for organizational approaches that are purposed to encourage diversity and development for female leaders. These goals fit the advocacy/participatory worldview or paradigm of qualitative research. Creswell (2009) adds to the argument of employing a qualitative research design by offering the following related to an advocacy or participatory paradigm:

Researchers might use an alternative worldview, advocacy/participatory, because the postpositivist imposes structural laws and theories that do not fit marginalized

individuals or groups and the constructivist do not go far enough in advocating for action to help individuals. The basic tenet of this worldview is that research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers' lives (p. 21).

Secondly, qualitative research is vital to explaining those nonnumeric, human factors that may contribute to the experiences of the participants and that cannot be explored statistically (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Clark, 2011). For example, the experience of being an African American female leader cannot be quantified. Lastly, the research problem fits neatly into Creswell's (2009) four characteristics for qualitative inquiry, which was presented above under the Qualitative Research section.

Specifically, the study utilized qualitative inquiry to answer all seven of the research questions. In order to ascertain the leadership characteristics of Black female leaders, barriers to career success, the processes that aid in overcoming such barriers, the factors required for sustaining success, and the resilience of the participant, the researcher employed the phenomenological approach of qualitative inquiry.

**Phenomenological approach.** The phenomenological approach is a type of qualitative inquiry that is concerned with the experience of the participants (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2009). The idea of phenomenology is described by Bryman (2008) as such "a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions concerning his or her grasp of that world" (p.697). According to Creswell (2009), there are two approaches to phenomenological studies. First, there is the

hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology is concerned with lived experiences (Creswell, 2009) and is a linear approach to understanding human action with an emphasis on the need to understand those actions “from the perspective of the social actor” (Bryman, 2008, p. 694). The second phenomenological approach is transcendental or psychological phenomenology. This approach is concerned less with the understandings of the researcher and more on a clear description of the participants’ experience. This is where the importance of bracketing or “epoche” comes into play (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing is a process where the researcher abandons their experiences in order to grasp the participants’ experiences as fully as possible (Creswell, 2007, 2009). The present study employed the latter of the two phenomenological approaches and the bracketing is highlighted in the section Role of Researcher.

Procedures for conducting phenomenological research include “in-depth interviews or multiple interviews” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61) that may include open-ended questions that will eventually develop themes (Creswell, 2009), which was exactly one of the data collection method of the current study.

**Quantitative research.** Research on resilience (Wagnild & Collins, 2009) has moved incrementally to include both qualitative and quantitative inquiry. Quantitative research is used to address problems by understanding those variables that may influence an outcome (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) asserts that the research problem of quantitative inquiry “is one in which understanding the factors that explain or relate to an outcome helps the investigator best understand and explain the problem” (p. 99). In order to identify the level of resilience (research question number 7) I used a resilience scale that satisfied the quantitative portion of this study, coupled with the proscribed open-

ended questions (Connor & Davidson 2003; Smith et al., 2008; Wagnild & Collins, 2009). Once this researcher ascertained the level of resilience of the participants, by way of the CD-RISC25, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics was employed in order to expand the evaluation of resilience. According to Agresti and Finlay (2009) “descriptive and inference are two type of statistical analysis-ways of analyzing the data. Social scientists use descriptive and inferential statistics to answer questions about social phenomena” (p. 3). Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the data and inferential statistics are used to compare and/or make predictions with the data. The process is described in the Description of proposed data analysis processes section of this chapter.

### **Process for Selection of Data Source**

This study employed purposive sampling in order to collect data from a population of African American female leaders who are described below in the unit of analysis section. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) purposive sampling is defined as “the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population in other words the researcher selects the sample using experience and knowledge of the group to be sampled” (p. 113). It was important for the researcher to select the specific population of women, because the study required an exact type of woman from the identified demographic group, who hold high ranking executive positions. With purposive samples the risks included the potential for mistakes regarding researcher’s criteria and final sample selections. Therefore, the biggest issue with purposive sample was the potential of human error (Gay et al., 2006).

Even further, the current research relied heavily on homogeneous sampling. Homogeneous sample is a type of purposeful sampling that according to Creswell and



Clark (2011) is the process “in which diverse individuals are chosen who have membership in a subgroup with distinct characteristics” (p. 174). The current subgroup highlighted included African American female leaders and is defined in the *Definition of Analysis Unit*.

In addition, according to Creswell and Clark (2011, p. 174) utilizing the homogeneous sampling method allows for the emergent sampling strategies as the study develops and “during the initial data collection” phase. In addition to the criteria highlighted in the Definition of Analysis Unit, the current study offered the following information in selecting participants for the study:

- Participants must be African American and identify as black
- Work or have worked (within the past 7 years) in a traditionally male dominated industry or business. Some examples included but were not limited to transportation, engineering, and technology, education, for profit businesses, entertainment, insurance, healthcare, and finance. Education, for example, is dominated by women, but the higher ranks are situated with male executives.
- Participants should have held a high ranking position in the c-suite or executive/senior management ranks of their organization. Examples include CEO, COO, VP, PRESIDENT, SENIOR MANAGER etc.

### **Definition of Analysis Unit**

The unit of analysis for this study was high achieving African American women in business. For the purpose of this research, *African American women* are women whose birth origin is the United States of America and who identify as Black (Stanley, 2009). Within this text, the term African American women was used interchangeably with the

terms Black women or Black females. Additionally, the phrase *Black female leaders* described women who held high ranking positions with a distinct level of authority within an organization or a community (Alston, 2005; Stanley, 2009). For the purpose of this study, high achieving women are defined as women who hold or have held (within the past 7 years) C-Suite positions (senior leadership or executive positions) or senior executive ranks in American based companies. C-Suite is defined as “the most important and influential group of individuals at a company. Being a member of this group comes with high-stake decision making, a more demanding workload and high compensation” (Investopedia, 2012). Participants were selected based on level of authority within their organizations or industry. The participants had to demonstrate or had establish distinct influence, value, vision, and expertise in their field.

### **Participant Description**

From the population described above, a sample of 22 participants was invited to participate in the study. From the 22, 17 participants agreed to be interviewed and 14 interviews were used for the study. These participants were interviewed to determine the strategies they used to achieve their success and to identify the obstacles they feel they have overcome. In addition, the interviews sought to ascertain whether their career success had an impact on their life satisfaction. In phenomenological studies, it is recommended that researchers interview between 5 and 25 “individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). A description of the interview process follows.

**Definition of Data Gathering Instrument**

The three major data gathering tools in this study included a comprehensive literature review that informed the nature and perimeters of the research, interviews that drew from the participants' experiences, and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC25).

**Data Collection**

The literature review of this study started the data collection process. The review of the literature guided the development of the research questions, purpose and significance stated in Chapter 1.

The purpose of the study was to explore the experience of African American female leaders who held executive positions in order to answer the research questions. In order to do so, the study employed a semi-structured interview approach. Semi-structured interviews are the dominant data gathering method for the feminist research framework (Bryman, 2008). According to Bryman (2008) feminist researchers advocate this method for four reasons:

1. a high level of rapport between interviewer and interviewee
2. a high degree of reciprocity on the part of the interviewer
3. the perspective of the women being interviewed
4. a non-hierarchical relationship

Semi-structured or unstructured interviewing includes open-ended questions that will allow for the participants "voice to be heard and in their own words" (p. 464). The advantages of this method are that the researcher is able ascertain the experience at a deeper level, clarify or seek completeness of information, engage in reciprocal

communication and most importantly engender rapport with the women. The disadvantage of this method is that it is more time consuming compared to structured interview methods.

In addition to a semi-structured methodology, the study employed a survey in order to understand the level of resilience the women possessed. The instrument used was the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) and was described in the *instrument* section of this chapter.

**Interview process.** The subjects were selected based on the information provided in the *Definition of unit analysis* section of this study. The participants were subsequently invited to participate in the study verbally via phone or via email by the researcher. A formal invitation letter was emailed to each participant who was interested in participating and is included in the appendix.

Prior to proceeding with interview questions, the participants were asked to read and complete an informed consent form. Once the consent form was signed, the researcher emailed the CD-RISC survey to each participant. The CD-RISC was collected at the time of the face to face interview and emailed prior to the start of the conferees call interviews.

Fourteen participants were selected for the interview. Three participants selected the face-to-face interview. The interviews were held with each individual participant in a private, safe and natural location agreed upon by both the researcher and the interviewee. Locations included either the participant's home or workplace. Those individuals who had geographic issues or time constraints preventing face-to-face interaction between the interviewee and interviewer were interviewed by phone using the conference call option

at FreeConferenceCall.com. Seven participants preferred the free conference call option primarily for convenience and 4 had geographic constraints. Once an interview setting was identified, each interview lasted between 31 minutes to 157 minutes with an average length of 82.77 minutes. An interview protocol outlined the purpose, questions and guidelines for conducting the interview.

Once the interview was complete all participants received a transcript of the interview and an allotted time to review for any edits or misrepresentations.

### **Instrument**

**Interview.** Each participant was asked 19 questions. Specifically, interview question number one is a “meaning question.” Meaning questions are defined by Creswell (2009) as questions that draw out information that lead to an understanding of the phenomenon. This question did not link to any research question but provided additional substantive information about the participants’ experiences. Questions three and six related to research question number one. Interview questions four and five were linked to research question number two. Interview question number seven was associated with research question number three. Interview questions two, eight, nine and 10 were, linked to research question number four. Interview inquiries 11 and 12 were associated with research question number five. Interview questions 13 and 14 were linked to the sixth study inquiry. Lastly, interview questions numbers 15-19, link to research question seven.

**CD-RISC.** The CD-RISC is a 25-item scale evaluating resilience, with higher scores indicating higher resilience ability. Each item is rated on a 5-point range of answers from not true at all (0) to true nearly all time (4). The total score can fall between

0–100. There are additional, more condensed versions of the CD-RISC (Scali et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008). Permission to use the CD-RISC was granted for the purposes of this project by the developers of the scale.

### **Validity of Data Gathering Instrument**

Interview: The research questions were developed out of the comprehensive literature review, presented in Chapter 2, on Black female leaders, leadership and resilience. In qualitative research, validity does not carry the same weight as it does in quantitative research (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Creswell (2009) asserts that validity in qualitative research means “that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 190). To ensure that validity was, at least, considered in this qualitative portion of the study, the researcher established clarity on the interview questions by leaning on a panel of experts composed of three professors of education who granted approval of the research as proposed and were members of the dissertation committee, as well as three additional panel members who had no direct connection to the study in order to provide objectivity therein. Their job was to ensure that the questions were clear and unambiguous for the participants (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Based on their collective feedback, examples of “organizational factors” in question 14 were provided to participants, as well as “aspects of leadership” in question 13, during the interview process. In addition, arrangement of the Research/Interview Question Logic was changed; see revised logic. Based on the calculation, the interview questions instrument received an initial clarity score of 73.79%. The researcher did not want to proceed without a score above 80.00%.

With the modifications listed above, the clarity score of the interview instrument was 80.8%.

Questions 15 – 19 were derived from Wagnild & Collins (2009) study on assessing resilience that prescribed open ended questions in order to “provide an opportunity for more in-depth exploration into personal resilience”(p.31), which lends to the validity of these questions. Therefore questions 15-19 were not changed through the expert panel process.

Creswell (2009) also suggested that the researcher can promote validity of the study by “clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study” (p. 192). The current study presented such data in the Role of Researcher section.

CD-RISC: According to Connor & Davidson (2003), the CD-RISC has high convergent and discriminant validity providing evidence of construct validity.

### **Reliability of Data Gathering Instrument**

Interview: The meaning of qualitative reliability “indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects.” In order to insure reliability of the qualitative portion of this study, the researcher employed a sound protocol in conducting the interview.

In addition, coders were utilized in order to promote reliability. This process is called intercoder agreement in qualitative research. The procedure relied on two individuals who reviewed the codes of the transcripts in order to provide insight. According to Creswell (2009, p. 191) intercoder agreement is basically “cross-checking” the codes used by the researcher.

**CD-RISC:** The CD-RISC is prescribed to assess the ability to adapt among and between participants despite their demographic, environmental and individual differences. Quantitative reliability means “that the scores received from past users, assessed in terms of reliability coefficients and instruments test-retest results need to be addressed” (p. 211). The reliability coefficient of the CD-RISC is .89 (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

### **Role of the Researcher**

It was important to the integrity of the study that the researcher separated personal beliefs related to being an African American female leader. Separation, in this case, is referred by Creswell (2007) as “bracketing out one’s own experiences” (p. 60). To successfully accomplish such, two processes were utilized including clearly defining the role of the researcher and the process of reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process by which the “researcher reflects about how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during the study” (Creswell, 2009. p. 233). The primary role of the researcher was that of an investigator. In that, the researcher was charged with investigating the phenomenon in an ethical manner with the primary goal being risk free research. This was accomplished through a statement of biases which included “comments on connections between the researcher and the participants and the research site”, IRB approval, and steps taken to “secure permission to study the participants or situation” (pp. 177-178).

**Statement of bias.** The researcher’s interest in African American female leadership and resilience stem from personal experiences. Experiences of career success, hardship, barriers, and leadership have shaped her individual reality.



The researcher felt that all of the participants were courageous and trendsetters, highlighting regard for the women.

In addition, the researcher felt an underlying need to complete the research in order to benefit women, particularly women of color, and to promote diversity and inclusion within organizations.

**Protection of human subjects.** This study aimed to uphold the highest ethical standards. At the head of this study, the researcher made every effort to collect data with high ethical standards, avoiding misleading information and plagiarism, while presenting a nonbiased review of the literature. Protection of human subjects was also vital to this research. According to Creswell (2009) researchers have a responsibility to the participants and to uphold the integrity of their fellow scholars by having sound ethical standards while conducting research. Creswell summarize the responsibilities as follows:

Researchers need to protect their research participants; develop trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organization or institution; and cope with new, challenging problems. Ethical questions are apparent today in such issues as personal disclosure, authenticity and credibility of the research report, the role of researchers in cross-cultural context, and issues of personal privacy through forms of Internet data collection (p. 87).

In order to mitigate these ethical concerns, this researcher utilized the following techniques:

- Prior to inviting subjects to participate in this study, the researcher sought permission from the IRB committee by submitting a thorough application and

supporting documents. The application was reviewed and completely approved by the IRB committee of Pepperdine University on February 19, 2009.

- In compliance with the IRB guidelines and in accordance with Pepperdine University policy on research involving human participants, all subjects were issued an informed consent and made aware of their rights to protections under federal, state and university regulations. The researcher explicitly received permission to use information obtained in the interviews for the purpose of the study. According to Creswell (2009), an informed consent form includes identification of the researcher and the sponsoring institution, how the participants are selected, the purpose of the research, and the benefits to participants. In addition, the form should include notation of risk, confidentiality guarantee to the participants, the assurance of the right to withdraw from the research, and the names of persons to contact with questions and concerns.
- None of the participants were asked to grant permission to reveal their personal information and all were assigned pseudonyms.
- The records of the subjects were protected in accordance with the Institutional Review Board requirements.

### **Description of the Data Analysis Process**

This section requires the researcher to inform the reader of the types of data analysis process utilized during the study. Creswell (2009) offers the following regarding the process:

“The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (p. 183).

According to Creswell and Clark (2011) the basic process involved in both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and interpretation begins by collecting the data. From this, it was suggested to reduce the data. Data reduction was used in both the quantitative and qualitative portion of this research and involved statistical analysis and summarizing the data, respectively (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

The proposed undertaking of data analysis was two fold in order to satisfy both the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study.

**Qualitative.** The qualitative portion of this research employed a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is inductive in nature. Inductive analysis is an approach that specifies that research is generated from theory. The process includes selective coding and interpreting the data in order to provide an understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2007) defines inductive data analysis as follows:

Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the “bottom-up” by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves the researcher working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes. It may also

involve collaborating with the participants interactively, so that they have a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerge from the process (pp. 38-39).

According to Creswell and Clark (2011) and Creswell (2009), the organization of this process is up to the researcher; however the content is derived from the grouping of themes. The themes should come directly from the participants. Provided by Creswell and Clark, the concrete steps used to conduct the data analysis are listed below, along with the step by step implementation method for current study:

1. "Preparing the data for analysis:" the present study utilized structured interviews and a survey of resilience. Transcripts from the interviews were used as the primary data sources. For the qualitative portion of this research, this step involved "organizing the document or visual data for review or transcribing text from interviews into word processing files for analysis" (p. 206). After the interviews were transcribed all participants received a transcript of the interview and a 1 week window to review for any edits or misrepresentations.
2. "Explore the data:" This took place after the transcript was reviewed and approved by the participant. The researcher reviewed and read the transcript in order to fully understand the entirety of the data. This involved developing notes and memos derived from the initial reading of the document. The memos were important first steps to developing broader categories, according to (Creswell & Clark, 2011).
3. "Analyze the data:" "Coding is the process of grouping evidence and labeling ideas so that they reflect increasingly broader perspectives" (p. 208). Each

response was coded on a listing and grouped according to category.

Responses were then grouped under each question. If a specific answer such as “collaborative” was given by more than one respondent, the interpreter annotated that answer to show where duplication occurred.

4. “Representing the data analysis:” following the compilation of the entire thread of responses, comments were stratified into families of synonymous phrases. The data was then tabulated according to category of response and was reflected in the accompanying verbal description, charts, graphs or figures highlighted in Chapter 4. Creswell and Clark (2011) describe this undertaking as follows, “Writing strategies for providing the evidence include conveying subthemes, or subcategories; citing specific quotes; using different sources of data to cite multiple items of evidence; and providing multiple perspectives from individuals in a study to show the divergent views” (p. 209).
5. “Interpreting the results:” This step of the process involved answering “How the research questions were answered by the qualitative findings?” (p.210). This is where the researcher drew from the literature review her own experience and professional understanding of the phenomena in order to develop meaning of the findings.
6. “Validating the data and results:” According to Creswell and Clark (2011), qualitative validity is important and checking for this type of validity involves checking the accuracy of the information collected from the qualitative methods. The approach used for the present study incorporated triangulations and disconfirming evidence. Triangulation is defined as “the use of more than

one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be cross-checked” (Bryman, 2008, p. 700). In the present study, the researcher utilized both the data gathered in the literature review and the data collected in the study. Disconfirming evidence is the process of presenting information in order to convey contrary inference to those proposed by the current research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The researchers informed the reader of both the consistent and conflicting results in Chapter 5.

**Quantitative.** For the quantitative portion of this study, SAS OnDemand software was used to run both the descriptive and inferential statistics. A one sample t-test was conducted to analyze the data derived from the CD-RISC. Specifically, the one sample t - test was used to compare the mean scores of the current participants to the general population of those people who report scores on the CD-RISC in 2003, in order to draw inferences about their level of resilience (Agresti & Finlay, 2009). The comparison group scores (mean =80.4) was based on the population of scores that were available from the CD-RISC developers. The one sample t-test was conducted in order to draw inferences about the level of resilience of this subset of African American women compared to the general population. Descriptive statistics were utilized in order to summarize the characteristics of the resilience scores among the group of participants with regard to the CD-RISC results:

1. Preparing the data for analysis”: This involved converting the data from an excel sheet into useful data using SAS Web Editor Software.
2. “Exploring the data:” this involved reviewing the data by conducting descriptive statistics to understand trends shown in the figures

3. “Analyzing the data:” This was solely based on the research questions and the hypothesis. Because the current study was exploratory in nature the major purpose of this portion was to conduct a comparison of groups in order to make certain inferences about resilience and Black female leaders. The researcher ran one sample t-test for this portion of the study.
4. “Representing the data analysis:” This step simply involved interpreting the results of the proposed statistical analysis. The present study used verbal interpretation, tables and graphs shown in Chapter 4.
5. “Interpreting the results:” This step involved comparing the results to both prior research and the initial research question; using both the literature review and the results to draw qualitative inference from the quantitative results. This provided an explanation of the findings shown in Chapter 5.
6. “Validating the data and results:” According to Creswell and Clark (2011) quantitative validity means “that the scores received from participants are meaningful indicators of the construct being measured” (p.210). According to Connor & Davidson (2003) CD-RISC has high convergent and discriminant validity which are indicators of construct validity. Construct validity is “occurs when investigators use adequate definitions and measures of variables” (p. 228).

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 began by reintroducing the purpose and goals of the study followed by the restatement of the research questions section. This section lent itself to subsequent sections and discussions, which included but was not limited to an outline of the

proposed data selection process, definition of the analysis unit of the proposed research design. The section included discussion on qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed method design. The procedure section highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing one or both of the research methodologies, leading to the use of a mixed method design for the current study. Research on feminist inquiry, advocacy/participatory paradigm, and phenomenological analysis were outlined in that same effort. The method of purposive sampling was also explained and used as the method of sampling for this study. The process of data collection was explained, outlined and detailed to include both semi-structured interviews and survey data collection. Validity and reliability was discussed, including utilizing an expert panel, coders and triangulation for the qualitative portion of the study and running Kappa statistics for the statistical portion of the research. A discussion of the data analysis process explained data reduction to ensure reliability of the results of coding the interview transcripts. The researcher role was defined and the researcher bias was outlined in order to validate the study. Lastly, ethical considerations like the protections of human subjects were discussed in order to remedy ethical concerns in compliance with IRB standards.



## **Chapter 4: Results**

“Well son I’ll tell you life for me ain’t been no Crystal Stairs...I’s still climbin” –

(Hughes, 1922)

### **Introduction**

The women who have shared their experiences have a desire to assist future leaders as they enter particular fields and tackle certain obstacles. It is hoped that the results of this study will lead to tools to diversify traditionally male dominated industries and to provide a guide for future leaders. The purpose of the research was to explore those variables that impact success for African American female leaders and to identify those factors that impact leadership, increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women who hold leadership positions. This chapter presents the results of the research. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed, and the results of the CD-RISC were recorded and findings are emphasized.

### **Profile of Participants**

There were 14 participants interviewed for this study. The participants represented various industries or businesses that are difficult arenas for women to rise to the top ranks of leadership, particularly for women of color. For example, one of the women interviewed is one of four women who have ever held the position, and the only African American female in business history that spans over 115 years. Another one of the participants has been in her position as Business Development Manager for 12 years and is the only woman and only Black person who has held the position in a business and industry that is saturated with men. The participants have received their education from

some of the best academic centers including Harvard Business School, Columbia, New York University, and University of California, Los Angeles, just to name a few. The majority of the women are situated in work environments where they were the first female, the first African American female, and/or the first Black person to hold their position and rank.

Considering the African Diaspora, the current study found it particularly important to define African American and Black as it is used in the study. For the purpose of this research, *African American women* are women whose birth origin is the United States of America and who identify as Black (Stanley, 2009). Within this text the term African American women will be used interchangeably with the terms Black women or Black females. Additionally, the phrase *Black female leaders* describe women who hold high ranking positions with a distinct level of authority within an organization or a community (Alston, 2005; Stanley, 2009). Again, high achieving women are defined as women who hold or have held C-Suite positions or senior level positions (senior leadership or executive ranks) in American based businesses or industries. C-Suite is defined as “the most important and influential group of individuals at a company. Being a member of this group comes with high-stake decision making, a more demanding workload, and high compensation” (Investopedia, 2012). Most importantly, participants were selected based on level of authority within their organizations or industry. The participants demonstrate or have established distinct influence, value, vision, and expertise in their field. As stated in Chapter 3, the method of sampling was purposive. Each participant was ensured confidentiality.

Thirteen industries are represented in the study. Selection of the participants was

not solely based on title because in the American society it has been demonstrated that women are sidelined when being selected for “c-suite” opportunities (Brizendine, 2008). Therefore, in this study women held titles ranging from Senior Manager to CEO. Of the participants, 10 were from the West Coast, 2 from the South Atlantic States, and 2 were from the East Coast. The participant’s ages ranged from the youngest at age 43 to the eldest at age 81, with an average age of 54. Thirteen participants stated that their ethnicity was African American and that they identified as Black. One participant reported having both African American and Puerto Rican origin and she identified as Black. For educational attainment, 1 participant held a Juris Doctorate (JD), 1 held a Doctorate, 9 held Master’s degrees, and 3 held a Bachelor’s degree. With regard to marital status, the majority of the women are married or were married. Specifically, 3 identified as single (of those 2 experienced divorce), 7 participants are married, 1 identified as widowed and 3 identified as divorced. Of the participants, 12 had children and 2 did not. The number of hours the participants reported that they worked in a week ranged from the lowest number of 40 to the highest number of 80 hours, which included travel time. Tables 11 through 15 show the demographics of the Black female leaders.

**Data collection.** The literature review of this study started the data collection process. The review of the literature guided the development of the research questions, purpose, and significance, all of which are stated in Chapter 1. This study is a mixed method design, therefore a combination of a set of semi-structured interview questions and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) were the primary data collection tools utilized. Specifically, the design is intended to be non-comparative but provide two pictures that offer an overall composite assessment of the problem (one used to inform

the other, Creswell, 2009). This strategy is called the Concurrent Embedded Strategy: The set of semi-structured interview questions were confirmed and validated by the panel of experts (see Chapter 3). According to Connor and Davidson (2003), the CD-RISC has high convergent and discriminant validity, which are categories of construct validity.

Full approval to proceed with the research was granted by Pepperdine University's IRB on February 19, 2013. Subsequently, emails were sent to possible participants in order to engender interest for their eventual participation. One hundred and four women who the researcher thought met the criteria specified in Chapter 3, were contacted and invited to participate. Reasons given for not participating in the research included, but not limited to, being too busy and not interested in such a study. Specifically, less than one third (27% or 28 people) of the women invited to participate, responded to the invitation. Of those, 17 participants were eventually interviewed but only 14 of these interviews were used in the study. Of the 14 that did ultimately participate, 3 knew the researcher personally (on a professional level), 4 were members of the researcher's sorority, 4 met the researcher at a professional mixer/networking event, and 9 were contacted on behalf of the researcher by someone else (some participants fall in more than one of the above categories). As stipulated by Bryman (2008), a high level of rapport proved fundamental to participation because in many of the cases, multilevel connections to the researcher were needed to secure involvement. It took approximately 39 days to secure and complete all of the interviews. Three of the interviewees were not included because after further insight into the participants' profession and industry, the study criteria were not met. For example, although 2 of the participants worked in a male dominated industry, including financial services and fire

safety, they had not reached the senior ranks in their fields. Another participant, had reached the highest educational and professional rank in her profession, however, her industry was nonprofit, which is not male dominated and therefore did not meet the criteria for the study.

All 14 participants gave permission for their interview to be tape recorded. Notes were taken during all 14 interviews. The interviews lasted between 31 minutes to 157 minutes with an average length of 82.77 minutes. In addition, to the set interview questions, there was an opportunity for clarity or follow up for both the participant and the researcher. Transcriptions were sent to each participant for their review and validation. The interviewees were given 3 to 5 days to review the transcripts and request any changes. Collectively, there were over 150 pages of transcripts, single spaced, 12 point font.

Of the 14 interviewees, 6 requested some changes or edits for clarification. The interview was held with each individual participant in a private, safe and neutral location agreed upon by both the researcher and the interviewee. Locations included either the participant's home or workplace. Those individuals who had geographic issues or time constraints that prevented face to face interaction between the interviewee and interviewer were interviewed by phone using the conference call option at FreeConferenceCall.com. Seven participants preferred the free conference call option primarily for convenience and 4 had geographic constraints. One of the biggest challenges in the study was coordinating schedules. The Black female leaders of the study lead very busy lives and careers.

The initial time requested of the participants was 1 hour. Two of the scheduled

interviews were started and postponed due to time constraints. Specifically, the delays were due to the participants' business obligations. The interviews were mostly started on time with start time variation of only 5-10 minutes. A few of the conference interviews went over the 1 hour time allotted. It is important to note that the participants were given three opportunities to break during the interview (at the 1/3, 1/2, and 2/3 mark) and ensured a hard stop if they needed to. Only 1 participant needed the break and there were no hard stops.

Below are tables that summarize the demographic information of the participants.

Table 10

*Participants Demographic by Age*

<u>Participants Age</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
20-29	0
30-39	0
40-49	7
50-59	4
60+	3

Table 11

*Participants Demographic by Education Level*

<u>Highest Education Level Attained</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
Doctorate	1
Juris Doctorate (JD)	1
Masters	9
Bachelor's	3
Some College	0

*Note.* Some participants hold more than one at any level and/or are working toward the next level

Table 12

*Participants Demographic by Hour Worked*

<u>Number of Hours Worked Per Week</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
40-49	3
50-59	8
60+	3

*Note.* Participants indicated that hours included travel time

Table 13

*Participants Demographic by Industry*

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
AEC ( Architecture, Engineering, & Construction) Industry	1
City Government	1
Entertainment	1
Environmental & Safety	1
Financial Services	1
Higher Education	1
Insurance	1
Design	1
Lobbying & Public Policy	1
Publications & Journalism	2
Public Service	1
Technology Information	1
Transportation	1

Table 14

*Participants Demographic by Title*

<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
Vice President or Senior Vice President	3
President & Chief Executive Officer	1
Chief Financial Officer	1
Executive Editor or Chief/Managing Editor	2
Chief Wharfinger	1
Manager Business or Organizational Development	2

<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
Vice Mayor	
Head of Agent	1
Provost & Senior Vice President	1
Shareholder & Principal	1

**Qualitative process.** The qualitative data reduction process of this study started with reading the transcripts multiple times in order to ascertain the nature of the whole phenomenon. Subsequently, the researcher went through the transcripts, line by line, question by question, in order to identify meaning units by way of coding.

Table 15

*Data Analysis Example Data Table for Coding*

*Question 1- Profile Question*

<u>Code</u>	<u>Textual or Structural Description</u>	<u>Occurrences</u>
Change	Experienced or expressed change(s) either within current position or throughout career either professionally or personally.	12
Fortune	Experienced or expressed the feeling of being lucky or fortunate, grateful, love for, or admiration for either the career or the career journey.	10
First Steps	Expressed a “had to start somewhere” ideology, meaning had to start somewhere in order to get the eventual career or position including having to attain additional education, training or work experience (characterized by beginning the initial step prior to eventual position)	9
Opportunity	Expressed having sought opportunity in career or on career journey including, but not limited to education, training or training programs, and work experience.	8
<u>Code</u>	<u>Textual or Structural Description</u>	<u>Occurrences</u>
Challenge(s)	Experienced or expressed challenge or hardship or high levels of responsibility either because of the	7



Qualities	profession or within the career/career journey Expressed or experienced career self-actualization/realization or self-worth through quality identification either externally or internally	7
First Woman	Experienced or expressed being the first woman or African American within the tenure, career, or environment.	5
Interest	Expressed having sought careers that were aligned with interest or one where a connection was felt either in the career or career journey.	5
Goal(s)	Expressed or experienced career path guided by future or present goals or a clear expression or understanding of goal(s) or path	4
Beyond Imagination	Experienced or expressed never expecting to ascertain a level of success or to be in the specific career or on such a career path.	4
Entrepreneur	Expressed and experienced having started or pioneered a business or new avenue in career or career journey	3
Support	Experienced or expressed receiving encouragement from supporters or mentors or even indirectly by an idol.	2
Respect	Expressed having sought respect while in position or a respectful position in general	1

*Note.* Profile Question / Interview Question # 1 – Own Code (meaning this question provided codes that are unique to profiling the subjects)

Table 16 is an example of the thematic logic and highlights the codes for interview question number 1, which is a profile question. There is a column of codes as well as a column that provides the textual or structural description of the theme's respective code. According to Creswell (2009), textual description explains the "what" of the participants experience and the structural description provides information of the "context or setting" of the experience (in essence the "how," p. 61). The interviews were not linear in nature, so the researcher made note of duplicate codes between the questions. It is also important to note that the interviews were conversational and the protocol was only a guide for the interviewer.

The transcripts and code sheets (17 pages) were given to two interraters who each

reviewed the data independently and separately verified the codes. Specifically, one verifier was given 7 transcripts and the other was given the other 7 transcripts. Confidentiality of the participants were upheld by adding only assigned letter codes to identify the transcript, therefore no personally identifiable information was present on the transcript. Repetition between question was not counted (frequency of the code), the codes were counted only once for each participant (occurrence). The last column of the code table is the number of occurrences between the participants. When there was inconsistency between the researcher and the coders, conversations were had between the researcher and both coders to rectify and come to a consensus on the next steps (to change the code, keep the code, or remove the code all together). The 1155.88 minutes of interview recordings produced over 150 pages (Times New Roman, single spaced 12 point font) of transcripts. The researcher reduced the transcripts to 17 pages (tables, single spaced, Times New Roman, and 12 point font) of codes. The textual and structural descriptions, served as themes for each research question. The table highlights the number of times the themes were mentioned (occurrences). Those themes that had more than eight occurrences were highlighted, however those themes that were indicative of the experience between industry and individual, were also considered. Duplication of the codes was highlighted to provide meaning of the “underlying” structure of the experience. The underlying structure is defined as a description of feeling connected to the phenomenon based on the collective experience of the person or persons who experienced it.

**Data analysis.** This is a mixed method study that relies on both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The study leaned heavily on qualitative inquiry for several

reasons which include the theoretical paradigms, including the Resilience Development Model, Black Feminist Theory and CRT, for which the study imbeds (Creswell, 2007). The specific qualitative approach utilized is phenomenology. The phenomenological approach requires that the researcher select a phenomenon, which in this case is African American female leadership or Black female leadership, “bracket” one’s individual understandings and collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The overall goal is to reduce the comprehensive data (which in this case included over 150 pages of transcripts) in order to ascertain the lived experiences of people who can directly speak to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Creswell & Clark, 2011).

**Data display.** Data display was arranged by research question, utilizing a combination of charts and quotes selected that were representative of the participants’ meanings or views. Participants were given labels by interview, in order to secure confidentiality. For example, data excerpts are labeled P1, P2 and so on. Again, themes were categorized as significant themes and unique themes for each research question. Significant themes were those themes that had eight or more occurrences either for one research question or between interview questions that spoke to the respective research question. Unique themes didn’t occur as often as the significant themes but were still considered important to the results of the study.

### **Profile Question**

Interview Question 1 provided a profile of the participant’s career and career journey. Interview Question 1 asked: Tell me a little about your career. See Table 16 for all of the themes in this question.

**Change.** The significant theme of this question was coded as change which meant that the participants experienced change(s) either within their current position or throughout their career journey either professionally or personally. The participants expressed that either they changed careers once or twice, changed industries, changed employer or experienced massive changes in their lives while on their career journey.

**Fortune.** The second significant theme of this section was the feeling of being lucky, fortunate, grateful, love for or admiration for either the career or the career journey. The participants expressed a genuine interest or admiration for their work or a sense of fortune for having the specific career journey that they had. The significant theme then became Fortune. Table 17 provides quotes that illustrate this theme.

**First Step.** The third significant theme is characterized by being the initial step prior to eventual career success or position. Specifically, the participants expressed a “had to start somewhere” ideology. The participants highlighted the importance of the “first” step as they ascent to their career heights.

**Opportunity.** The fourth significant theme is characterized by having sought opportunity on their career journey, which included but is not limited to education, training programs, and work experience. Participants expressed that in order to advance in their career ascent they had to be given or sought the opportunity for advancement. Table 17 is a depiction of the significant statements related to the themes.

Table 16

*Examples of Significant Statements*

Significant Statements
<p><b>Change</b></p> <p>“It changes all the time. I am always meeting different people and there are always different tasks on hand; I have to multitask and keep things straight” (P1, Personal Communication, February 21, 2013).</p> <p>“I’ve had several careers” (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).</p> <p>“My career has, well I guess you could call me a career changer. I changed my career two or maybe three times in my lifetime” (P6, Personal Communication, March 21, 2013).</p> <p>“My career, I guess, has been a little sporadic in that I would do different kinds of things” (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).</p>
<p><b>Fortune</b></p> <p>“This was a job I held for 10 years and I love it...” (P5, Personal Communication, March 18, 2013).</p> <p>“I am glad I turned it down because in retrospect the company closed 19 offices” (P7, Personal Communication, March 25, 2013).</p> <p>“I really loved doing that, I loved having the direct contact with the students...” (P10, Personal Communication, March 27, 2013).</p> <p>“I have always escalated or elevated my position in corporate America. So it was always a much better position than I had previously before” (P7, Personal Communication, March 25, 2013).</p>
<p><b>First Steps</b></p> <p>“I got my Bachelor degree in sociology/social welfare and then I got a Master’s degree in criminal justice administration...” (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).</p> <p>“...I was able to find a position where I was a contract HR recruiter. I took it even though it was only a year contract; they said they could renew it. I took it because at least I could get my foot in the door somewhere. I was applying to become a HR generalist but I just couldn’t get in” (P3, Personal Communication, March 14, 2013).</p> <p>“As a professional and after college, I started working as a manufacturing engineer and training for a management position. The training position led to a leadership position...” (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).</p> <p>“I started in a formalized management training program, which banks don’t offer anymore...” (P8, Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).</p>
<p><b>Opportunity</b></p> <p>“I stayed with that company for two years and then was given an opportunity to move into another capacity for a company that did safety compliance for school districts” (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).</p> <p>“When I made that decision a colleague of mine said (Well while you’re there you have a job” because she had founded a magazine that was health focused” (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).</p>

*Note.* Adopted from Creswell (2007) pp. 271-272

### Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: What are the leadership characteristics of Black female leaders? Interview questions 3 and 6 sought to answer this question. Figure 3 shows the signature themes and the occurrences.

### Leadership

**Collaborator.** All of the participants indicated that being inclusive was one of the qualities of their leadership style, in one way or another throughout their individual interview. However, when asked specifically about individual leadership style, teamwork or group participation had the most occurrences of the themes among the leaders. For example, the following statement “collaborative, consensus building, inspiring and fun” illustrates this concept (P14, Personal Communication, March 30, 2013). The participants acknowledged in one way or another that teamwork and collaboration was vital to productivity.

**Autonomy.** The participants indicated that they really utilize a hands-off approach especially when (a) working with people whom they trust (b) who they knew could handle the work independently or (c) who they felt needed autonomy in order to get the work done effectively. Excerpts that illustrate this theme are as follows:

“My leadership style is to say what we need to do and to get back and let you do it...” (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).

“As far as leading a team, I make sure that they understand our plan and objectives but I give them the opportunity to do their job. I do not micromanage them on a daily basis” (P3, Personal Communication, March 14, 2013).

“Once I identified these people, their skills, and their abilities to get the job done to a level of satisfaction, I basically took a hands off approach” (P5, Personal Communication, March 18, 2013).

“I like people who can get the job done. I let them do it their way and I believe in giving a lot of latitude to people (P7, Personal Communication, March 25, 2013).

In addition to the significant themes, unique themes included but were not limited to rewarder, results driven and care. The themes and the significant statements are highlighted below. The textual or structural description of the theme is highlighted.

**Rewarder.** The participants expressed a style that valued employees and their contributions by way of rewards and/or positive strokes. Specifically, there was a collective understanding of the importance of an informal or formal rewards’ system in order to impact morale and productivity.

For example, P8, stated “I value recognition for the team because I don’t think in our society, in our culture, in our workplaces, we do enough to make people feel valued and that is a big, big key to me” (Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).

**Results driven.** The participants expressed a value system based on productivity, and “getting the work done” as a leader. Supportive thematic excerpts are as follows:

“So, my expectation is that people are competent and they can get the work done” (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).

“I like results. I’m very results oriented. I like working with people who can get the job done” (P7, Personal communication, March 25, 2013).

“...the job is to get the work done and get it done well” (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).

“...it’s also one of a very strong work ethic and excellence. I think sometimes that becomes the biggest challenge...” (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

**Care.** Another significant theme is care, which is indicative of having an admiration for and awareness of people, their feelings or situation, by behaviorally expressing protective and/or supportive characteristics. Thematic quotes that support this finding include:

“I mean, I am concerned about people and I care about people and how they feel...” (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).

“Considerate of others because I want people to listen. I say considerate because I address behaviors, desired behaviors and desired outcomes and I don’t attack people. I’ve been in the industry, and when I say industry I mean the industry of management, long enough to know that people can’t hear you when they feel attacked.”

“But at the end of the day, I still want folks to go home feeling good about themselves (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).

“I have an informal work style. I love to get to know my staff, know their families, and kids’ names. I knew everybody by name even when I had a staff of 136. I hated it if I didn’t know a person’s names and I went to great lengths to know...” (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

Other unique themes that provide insight to the Black female leader’s characteristics were related to communication styles that are direct, yet motivated by consensus building:



“Direct because it is efficient” (P8, Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).

“Direct and supportive” (P11, Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

“My leadership style is candid and open” (P12, Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

“I am bold, my style is bold and sometimes people might not expect that especially coming from a woman” (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

“I have an instinct for mediating things” (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).

“...I can come up with, hopefully, a solution that’s a win-win for all of the stakeholders involved in the problem” (P14, Personal Communication, March 30, 2013)

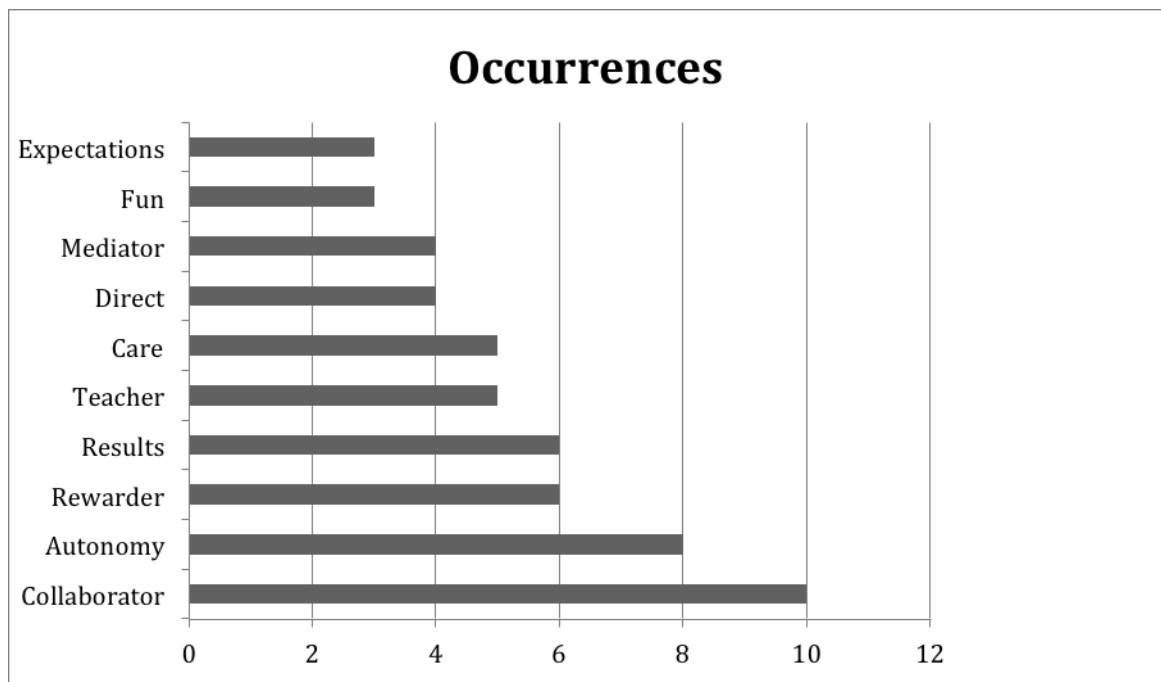


Figure 3. Significant Themes & Unique Themes.

**Decision making style.** With regard to decision making style, 6 participants described a three step process, 4 described a two-step process and 4 did not indicate a clear process.

Table 17

*Decision Making Process*

<u>Type of Process</u>	<u>Textual or Structural Description</u>	<u>Significant Statement Example</u>
3 Step Process	Expressed a need to assess the situation to determine stakeholders and specifics of the problem “who owns the problem” and pieces, then ask questions to gather information from experts or team, and then decide on an outcome	“So my process would be: acknowledge that there is a problem, seek guidance or council, and then weigh my options” (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).
2 Step Process	Expressed a need to first ask questions in order to gather information and then discuss solutions	“I would first bring them into my office, listen and ask questions...we’re going to come up to a solution” (P5, Personal Communication, March 18, 2013).
<u>Type of Process</u>	<u>Textual or Structural Description</u>	<u>Significant Statement Example</u>
No Process	Expressed a flexible decision making style that is non linier and/or depend on the situation but that drives solutions	“For me it depends. If there’s something, where I’d like for people to come up with solutions...” (P6, Personal Communication, March 21, 2013).

Table 18 is a representation of the three processes preferred by the participants.

The table also highlights a significant statement for the theme *process*.

In addition to the type of process, there were also themes indicative of the value system in decision making. There were no significant themes but unique themes included collaboration and consensus building.

## Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: What are the assumptions of these leaders with regard to their followers? Interview questions 4 and 5 sought to answer this question. The answers to these questions were integrated in Table 19 in order to provide a depiction of both the significant and unique themes.

Table 18

*Themes in IQ number 4 and IQ number 5*

<u>IQ # 4 Characteristics Valued In Employees</u>	<u>IQ# 5 Themes: Day-to-Day Challenges w/ Employees</u>
Innovation	<u>Significant Theme</u> Managing People
Work Ethic Initiative	<u>Unique Themes</u> Teaching Morale
Communication	Communication

**Managing people.** Managing people was identified as the significant challenge of the participants. Managing people is making sure that all staff are able to effectively get their work done, are informed of expectations and held accountable in any situation and able to work together as a team (textual or structural description). All of the leaders expressed that managing people takes up the bulk of their time and energy. For example, P4 shared, “wow, one of my mentors told me that one of the most challenging things in business is managing people” (Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).

**Innovation.** Innovation was a significant theme having eight occurrences among the participants (over half of the participants). Participants expressed a desire to work with staff who are creative and who seek and implement new ideas. Specifically, the leaders valued new methods or ideas and people who were creative. Excerpts that illustrate this theme include;

“I value people who step up with new ideas, who are innovative...” (P1, Personal Communication, February 21, 2013).

“When an employee comes up with a really original or creative idea or adds a lot of fun in something that they’re doing it take us to a whole new level” (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

**Communication.** As you can see from Table 19, the theme communication was highlighted as both a characteristic that the participants valued in their employees and represented one of their day-to-day challenges with employees. Specifically, the participants expressed a desire to work with staff who could exchange information verbally, orally or interpersonally. For example, P1 stated that she valued people “who are not afraid to talk to people they don’t know” (Personal Communication, February 21, 2013) and P8 expressed, “I want my employees to feel safe to tell me anything even if you screwed up” (Personal Communication, March 26, 2013). On the other hand, participants expressed that the challenge with their staff is exchanging information via verbal, written, email etc., in order to get work done or as needed for day to day interactions (i.e. the textual or structural description). For example, P6 stated, “Some of the challenges are miscommunication; people not just getting out of their seat and walking over to someone’s desk and asking them questions to get information instead of

sending emails back and forth” (Personal Communication, March 21, 2013) and P8 stated that “ I will still say (communication) it is a challenge, learning your audience; learning that everybody doesn’t hear things the same way. The more you know about a person the better you know how to communicate with them” (Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: How do these leaders view the role of women in leadership?

Interview question 7 sought to answer this question. The themes associated with this inquiry include *Many* and *Any*. The participants either viewed women as capable, critical, and visual in leadership roles, and in nontraditional roles women are expanding in presence and taking their places in those roles (*Many*) or they viewed women as capable to be in any leadership role and there being no disadvantage to having women leaders (*Any*).

**Any.** “I don’t think there is a specific place for women. I think women can be in any place” (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).

“I see women needing to play one of the most significant roles ever since the beginning of time. I really think that much of the marketplace and the world dynamics have been corrupted and messed up by men, not all men, but a good number of them” (P12, Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

**Many.** “I think there are a lot of opportunities for women and a lot of workplaces have a lot more accommodations for women...” (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

“So the role I think women play in leadership is critical to bringing another voice at the table” (P14, Personal Communication, March 30, 2013).

Table 20 highlights the advantages and disadvantages that women leaders may face in leadership from the participants collective notions. The participants indicated that a disadvantage of women in leadership is work life balance and is structurally characterized as a concern or hardship of having to balance work and family obligations and leveraging “having it all.”

Significant themes identified as advantages include new perspective (women add new viewpoints to the discussion which may have been missing in leadership based on the experience of women) and nurturer (characterized by a genuine care or concern for people and staff and a motherly way of leading).

Table 19

*Disadvantages and Advantages*

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Significant Theme</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
New Perspective Nurturer		Work Life Balance
Open Minded New Ideas Team	<u>Unique Themes</u>	Familiarity (lack of) Actualization Ceiling

**Research Question 4**

Research Question 4 asked: What barriers to career success do African American female leadership report as having to overcome? Interview questions two, eight, nine, and 10 sought to answer this question.

**Obstacles & limitations.** The participants reported experiencing quite a few obstacles, which depended on multiple interrelated facets of their career, industry and/or personalities. Five of the unique obstacles include door, first, visible, stereotypes, and within gender which are described in Table 21.

Table 20

*Obstacles*

<u>Obstacles</u>	<u>Description</u>
Door	Experienced or expressed a challenge getting in the door or having access to opportunities or having limited access to certain professional communities or networks that would promote social capital or resources
First	Experienced or expressed being the first or the only or one of a few women or African Americans
Visible	Experience or expressed a need to be heard or have a voice based
<u>Obstacles</u>	<u>Description</u>
Visible	on being socialized to be quiet or polite and struggling to be recognized
Stereotypes	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities while having to combat widely held belief and images of women and women in leadership
With Gender	Experienced or expressed a struggle or conflicts with female counterparts

One of the significant themes with regard to the limitations of the black female leaders was categorized as communication. Meaning, participants expressed or experienced struggle with regard to communication style, feeling as if candor or straightforwardness was a downfall as opposed to an asset. Table 22 outlines the reasons for the limitations.

Table 21

*Reasons for Limitation*

<u>Significant Theme</u>	<u>Intersectionality</u>	<u>Perceptions</u>
Textual or Structural Description	Experienced or expressed a obstacles based on both gender and race or a combination of gender, race and class	People have preconceived insights on what black female leaders are or what a leader is
Significant Quote	“In the past, I have had to deal with people who believed that I didn’t deserve or was smart enough for certain roles based on my race and gender” (P3, Personal Communication, March 14, 2013)	“The problem is that they feel like I am one of them or I am an exception to the rule; that most black women are not like me” (P7, Personal Communication, March 25, 2013).

**Rise to the top.** The participants felt that their ascent to the top of their career was generally harder relative to their situation, environment and circumstances or based solely on their gender as opposed to being a Black woman. Excerpts that support this finding are outlined below.

“No, not as a Black female but maybe just as a female in general” (P1, Personal Communication, February 21, 2013).

“I think being a black female and trying to get to my level has definitely been hard...” (P3, Personal Communication, March 14, 2013).

“Yes and No. Do I feel like I missed out on opportunities? Yeah probably, but what I have tried to do throughout my career is counter balance whatever ‘it’ might be” (P6, Personal Communication, March 21, 2013)

Unique reasons for a seemingly difficult ascent to the higher ranks in leadership include being the first or the only one of a few women or African Americans (first), in a



male dominated, specifically white male dominated, industry, company, top executives or community (male dominated), and expectations that support stereotypes as well as suggest that Black women are not competent or have the commonsense to be in the highest positions (expectations). Another unique reason is the hardship or adversities associated with having to work harder than counterparts in order to prove professional value, stay ahead or processing an “extra” drive to achieve higher than others (twice). More unique themes associated with the reason for a seemingly more difficult rise to the top are listed in the appendix.

**Stereotypes.** Collectively, Black female leaders’ stereotypes do impact the participants, particularly more potent if there is internal or behavioral buy in. Meaning, Black female stereotypes are real only if you believe them to be, consequently internalizing them (buy in). The significant theme here is *characteristics*, which is descriptively an affirmation that features the five prominent Black female leader stereotypes (e.g. the mammy, jezebel, sapphire, crazy Black bitch and superwoman). These stereotypes may describe the women or their peers at any given time, but are not monolithic or superimposing for all black female leaders.

### **Research Question 5**

Research Question 5 asked: How do African American women overcome barriers to career success? Interview questions 11 and 12 sought to answer this question.

**Opportunities.** Opportunity was a recurring subject throughout the interviews between the participants. The participants believed that in general they had the same opportunities as their male and female counterparts. The factors that were helpful to in accessing opportunities included having the relationships and niche. For example, P1,

stated that "...what I do is so relationship driven that it doesn't really matter if you are woman or man, Asian, Black or Caucasian. If you don't have the contacts, you are not going to go too far" (Personal Communication, February 21, 2013). P2 highlighted the advantage of having a niche and stated that "when people put you in a certain category, whatever that category, they don't care that you're Black. When you are categorized as a certain kind of person and the opportunity comes up, they'll put you in that position" (Personal Communication, March 13, 2013). As well as, P12, who states that "when you are professional and you're providing services you always have to make sure that you have the skills that optimize your value proposition" (Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

Those opportunities that were not as easily accessible were relative to the situation, environment, the stakeholders, and the organization. Examples of the type of opportunities that the leaders thought they may not have access to included social networks that promote capital and mentoring opportunities. Excerpts that support these findings include:

"No; due to limited network in the industry" (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).

"I think I had to prove myself every step of the way whereby, it was very obvious some people were given opportunities because of who they knew, more from a political perspective" (P5, Personal Communication, March 18, 2013).

"So if positions are obtained through contacts and you are not in contact with people in high up leadership positions, then you are not going to be able to compete for those jobs (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).

Limited opportunity to mentorship was also a unique theme. Mentorship was relative to the participant and the industry for which they thrive. In situations where there is limited opportunity to mentorship participants noted that familiarity and industry factors are influences, for example.

“So, when you are a pioneer, you get to write the first chapter. It is very hard to get mentoring from other women or women of color. The models that I have been a part of, the men, because it’s men defined structures, the rules of the game is you show up and you play. For everybody else, of course, sometimes they mentor each other but a lot of times it’s a sink or swim environment” (P12, Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

“Mentorship is a piece that I wanted to speak to. I think that we often times think and feel that the only mentor that would understand us would be an African American woman and I did earlier on in my career” (P14, Personal Communication, March 30, 2013).

The participants highlighted several methods and beliefs that they used to overcome barriers including, again, network and niche. Other unique themes include faith, work ethic, not buying into the stereotypes (buy in) and having mentors are also worthy of mention. These themes are highlighted in Figure 4 as success strategies and the thematic descriptions are included in the appendix of this document.

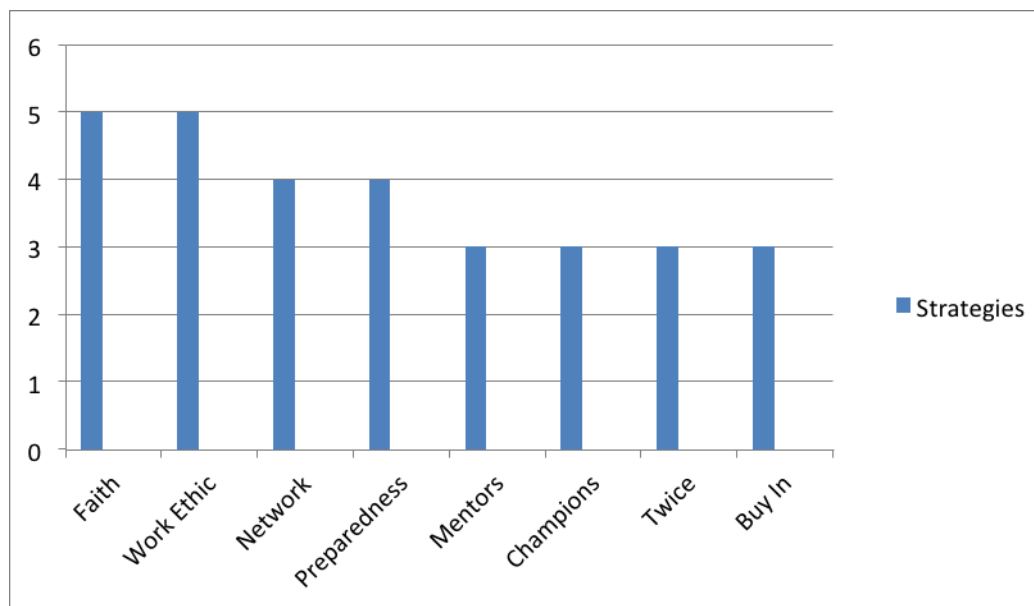


Figure 4. Success Strategies.

### Research Question 6

Research Question 6 asked: What are the factors required to retain career success?

Interview questions 13 and 14 sought to answer this question.

P 12 communicated the collective idea behind career retention “I think staying on top has been harder than getting there. You can get there but you have to keep it” (Personal Communication, March 28, 2013). The leaders of this study collectively outlined both personal and organizational factors necessary to retain career success.

**Personal factors.** Personal factors that were unique themes include but are not limited to mistakes, awareness, sharing, and negotiation.

Mistakes are described as the ability to learn from your failures and the mistakes of others. Participants suggested that this was extremely valuable to retaining success because “...failures are good. You don’t actively seek them but you value what you can learn from them” (P8, Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).

Awareness is being astutely conscious of cultural, people or situational problems. P10's significant statement represented the idea well, in this case.

"The power within the organization is not necessarily obvious it may be linked to a certain position within the organization because if the person is CEO some may think they have overwhelming power which is not necessarily so, sometimes that power can be very low in the organization but very pervasive. I think this is one of the biggest issues we have to learn how to deal with" (Personal Communication, March 27, 2013).

Another significant statement that highlights the unique theme is as follows:

"So recognizing and being aware of what you're walking into. For example, working with an organization that wants to do business with a woman owned business; I have to take the lead" (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).

The participants also mentioned sharing as a unique theme. Sharing is the notion or attitude that success requires one to help someone else after self. Meaning leaders should take a second look down while at the top. The collective idea is that you reap what you sow.

"When you share it comes back for the whole neighborhood and that's where the Underground Railroad concept comes from" (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).

"Another one is leave the ladder down and bring someone with you. Shame on anyone, but specifically a Black woman, who gets to my position or any position of influence and we don't pause to help someone else. Shame on anyone who does that" (P7, Personal Communication, March 25, 2013).

“I think my philosophy that really guides me every single day is walk in the path that open doors for others to follow” (P10, Personal Communication, March 27, 2013).

Negotiation was also a unique theme as it related to retaining career success.

Negotiation is the ability to communicate personal and professional assets and limitations in order to discuss value propositions. The result is the ability to leverage in maintaining your status of influence. Significant statements that highlight this unique theme include:

“I fully believe that people are not defined by their title in the company. They should be defined by how they work with people around them, earn respect, and negotiate with them” (P1, Personal Communication, February 21, 2013).

“In a larger organization, I believe I have the skill set and the qualifications to negotiate wherever I want to be...” (P8, Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).

**Organizational factors.** Organizational factors that appeared as unique themes include but are not limited to cultivation and diversity. A work environment of superiors who encourage development of staff’s skillset or leadership characteristics (cultivation) was a factor that promoted retention of success or impacted the experience either negatively or positively depending on the situation. Additionally, diversity was another factor that impacted the leadership experience of the participants. The textual or structural description of diversity is an open workplace or mindset in order to grasp the benefit of differences and multiple perspectives. Many of the participants described their situation as being the first or one of few (either woman, or African American, or African

American woman) in their organization or their industry. Cultivation and diversity were both instrumental in sustaining successful careers.

### **Research Question 7**

Research Question 7 asked: What level of resilience is needed in such leadership positions in order to succeed? Interview questions 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 as well as the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) sought to answer this question.

Again, resilience is defined by Wagnild and Collins (2009) as “the ability to adapt or ‘bounce back’ following adversity and challenge and connotes inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity” (p. 29).

Twelve of the 14 participants reported having a philosophy that guides their life. Philosophies identified were based on people, faith, drive (internal will), or learn (the desire to learn). Half of the participants’ philosophies were driven by people as opposed to internal reward or gain and were positive in nature. Other unique themes included faith (philosophy driven by belief in a higher power) and drive (philosophy that is action oriented for continuance or movement in career or life). Significant statements are highlighted in Table 23.

Table 22

#### *Philosophy – Significant Statements*

<u>Significant Statements</u>	
<u>People</u>	“It is the philosophy that you can get anything done if you don’t care who gets the glory” (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).
	“I believe that everyone is created equal” (P14, Personal Communication, March 30, 2013).
<u>Faith</u>	

“I think personally, it is to always see the blessing despite the challenges” (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

“I have faith by ten points that are always evolving that I try to look at and kind of add to a list in order to keep me focused on what really matters in the world so I don’t get too far off” (P7, Personal Communication, March 27, 2013).

Drive

“My philosophy today is you got to stay three steps ahead. So when the man pushes you back two, you still one step ahead” (P11, Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

“It’s a philosophy that I’ve adopted that guides me in general and not very business orientated, (keep moving forward) and (go with the flow)”, (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013).

Creswell (2007)

**Faith in difficult times.** The significant theme associated with experiencing or overcoming difficult times was faith. Specifically, the participants relied heavily on faith to get through difficult times. Faith was thematically described as having or believing in a higher power.

Additionally, the subjects reported a consciousness of people’s perceptions of them in difficult situations. More specifically, 5 participants reported that people see them as one who is cool under pressure, one who can think delegate, motivate and solve the situation. For example, P13 stated that

“I once had someone tell me that I was like a swan and how the swan is in the pond all you see is the beautiful swan. What you don’t see is underneath the feet that are really flapping seriously underneath keeping that momentum going. You don’t see that flapping, that’s going on” (Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

Other subjects reported being seen as invincible or one who can handle anything that comes her way. P4 stated that “people would say I am a warrior and can handle anything that comes my way. It’s interesting that people think I am just tough or invincible”



(Personal Communication, March 15, 2013). Others said that people viewed them as systematic or generally positive in difficult times.

**Outlook.** In general, the participants had a positive outlook of life with variations that were dependent on the environment, organization and situation. Significant statements or excerpts that support this finding are as follows:

“Well, it depends on the day but today, generally, I am happy. Generally speaking, I am happy with my life even with all the upheaval and lack of sleep. I think I tend to see the glass half full” (P1, Personal Communication, February 21, 2013).

“I see the glass half full” (P2, Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).

“It depends, sometimes I will see it as half empty, sometimes I will see it as half full and it really depends what seems to be the most advantageous at the time. Sometimes it may be good to see the glass as half empty because it may represent how much you have left to do and you may not have anything left to do. Sometimes I have to see it half full because it means that there is opportunity for me to do more, I can’t say I go one way or the other it depends on the circumstance” (P10, Personal Communication, March 27, 2013).

When asked what set them apart from anyone else, the unique themes included outlook (personal value, perspective and a positive attitude) and care (empathy and compassion for others).

### **Quantative Process**

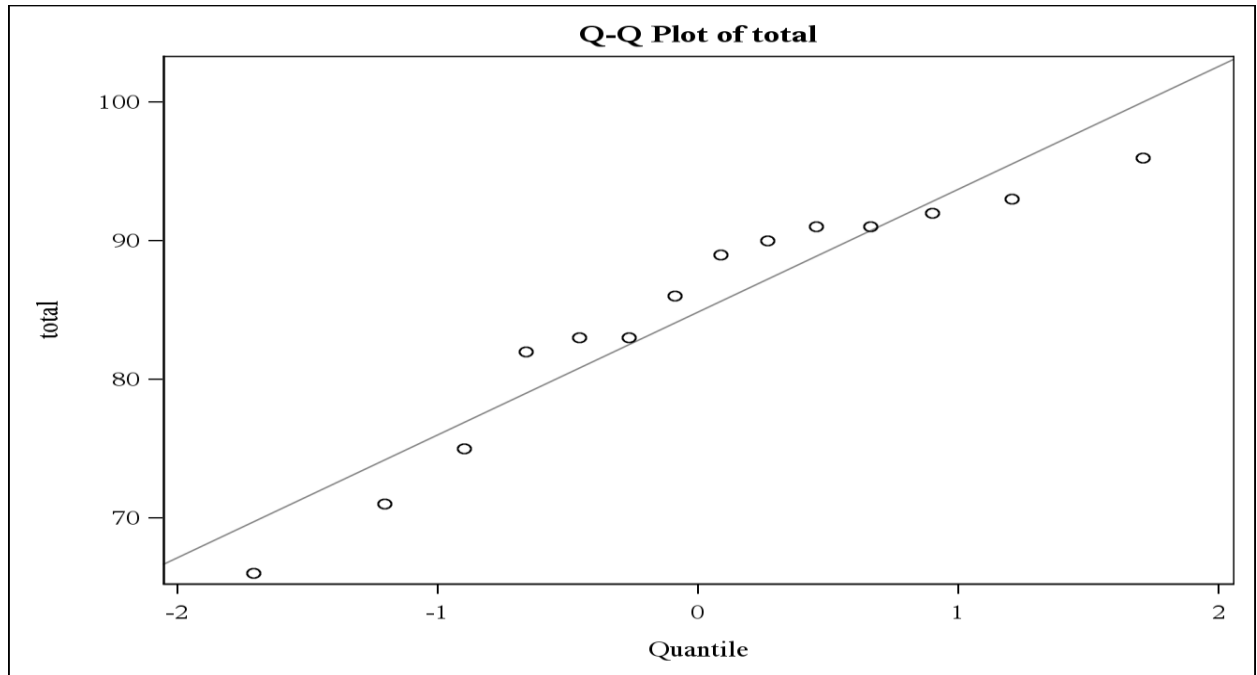
The quantative process of the study started with the reviewing of the data. Specifically, the responses to the CD-RISC 25 were inputted in an Excel document by the

researcher. A coder reviewed the participants' responses and compared those to the Excel sheet in order to verify that there weren't any errors. Once verification was received, the document was then uploaded into the SAS software. Subsequently, the researcher ran descriptive statistics, a one sample t test and a Cronbach's alpha.

### **CD-RISC Results**

The same 14 participants who were interviewed also provided responses to the CD-RISC 25. The CD-RISC is a 25-item scale evaluating resilience, with higher scores indicating higher resilience ability. Each item is rated on a 5-point range of answers from not true at all (0) to true nearly all the time (4). The total score can fall between 0–100 (Scali et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008).

According to Conner and Davidson (2012) the national mean of a random sample of participants in the U.S., utilizing the same instrument, was 80.4. With this information, we ran a one sample t-test in order to compare the means of the two groups. The mean score of the participants in this study was 84.86 with a standard deviation of roughly 8.86. The t value = 1.88 and the p=.08.



*Figure 5.* Distribution of Total Scores. Note. Adapted from SAS 2012.

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of total scores compared to a normal distribution in a Q-Q plot, a visual means of comparing to distributions by plotting their qualities against each other. It can be seen that the scores ranged from less than 66 to 96 and that the distribution did not depart dramatically from a normal distribution (which is represented by the straight line in the plot). There was not a cluster, at either end, of the resilience scale by these African-American women leaders, rather they ranged widely on the resilience measure. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was .89.

### **Summary**

The data collection process of this study included both a semi-structured interview and the CD-RISC survey. The researcher used consensus examination in order to code the data, with the assistance of two coders. The interraters were utilized in an effort to promote reliability of the findings. A mixed method design was utilized with an

emphasis on the qualitative portion of the analysis. Phenomenology was utilized in the qualitative portion of the study. The themes were generated from the exclusive use of the transcripts of the interviews. There was a large amount of data collected from both the qualitative and quantitative methods. A discussion of themes, the one sample t test and their implications is presented in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations**

“The secret of successful African American women is that almost all of the stories are the same” – Doris Topsy-Elvord (Personal Communication, March, 2013).

### **Introduction**

The women leaders who participated in this study have attained, retained, and succeeded in their careers by way of resilience and a true understanding of their abilities, networks, and opportunities. Their collective achievements have provided a guide for aspiring women leaders to pursue their visions of career success. The researcher did not ignore the barriers or challenges that are documented and clear given their intersectionality. Therefore, this research presents the experience in the terms of the Black female leaders. Their willingness to share their story will lend heavily to the development of others on an individual or collective level, as well as to organizations that intend to be inclusive and diversify their leadership ranks.

This chapter is a summary of the research and provides a synopsis of the findings. Implications for various subgroups and recommendations for future research are given. Lastly, final thoughts related to the study are presented from the researcher’s view.

**Summary of the study.** The purpose of the research was to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement, and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership appointments. The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resilience of African American women in order to develop a blueprint for organizational strategies that

promotes diversity as a whole and advancement for female leaders.

The literature review in Chapter 2 informed the direction of the research. The literature review covered three major areas:

1. Working women in America, which outlined the status of women in the workforce, past and present, given their situated presence in a patriarchal system.
2. African American women and their experience in America. Touching on oppression, systematic and blatant, professional growth, and resilience.
3. Understanding resilience, presenting a look at the three areas of study in resilience as well as subtopics that benefit the study.

This study utilized a mixed method research design leaning more on the qualitative aspects of the research within a phenomenological approach. In other words, the leadership experience, strategies to success, barriers and resilience were examined from the perspective of Black female leaders. Additionally, the CD-RISC was used to grasp an understanding of the level of resilience of the leaders. Utilizing purposive sampling, 14 participants were interviewed in this study. A profile of the participants is included in Chapter 4.

The semi-structured interview questions provided a loose protocol for the interviews, because the goal was to have conversational dialogue with the leaders in order to understand the experience from their viewpoints. Clarity of the research questions were provided by a panel of experts. The interviews included 14 participants. Over 150 pages of interview transcripts coupled with the responses of the CD-RISC 25, served as the raw data. The researcher performed content analysis and came up with meaning units and themes that were then verified or corroborated by two interraters. Chapter 4 presents

details of the results.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study speak directly to the experience of Black female leadership in traditionally male dominated, American based businesses or industries given the documented adversities including glass ceiling practices, limited opportunity for mentorship and stereotypes, just to name a few. The goal of the findings is to (a) provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles and (b) provide an outline of the success, advancement, and resilience of African American women in order to provide blueprints for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for female leaders.

### **Profile of Participants**

The career journey of the participants provided unique information that corroborates with the general findings of the study. The question, “tell me a little about your career” exposed not only individually specific details about the participant, but also collective themes that were significant to this group of leaders. Significant themes are those themes that had more than eight occurrences and therefore expressed by more than half of the participants. Significant themes of this section included change (experienced change(s) either within current position or throughout career either professionally or personally), fortune (experienced or expressed the feeling of being lucky, fortunate, grateful, love for, or admiration for either the career or the career journey), first steps (expressed a “had to start somewhere” attitude meaning they had to start somewhere in order to get to the eventual career or position including having to attain additional education, training, and work experience) and opportunity (expressed having sought

opportunity in career or on career journey which included but is not limited to education, training, and work experience).

It is important to note that these initial themes appeared multiple times throughout the interviews, indicative of not only mere occurrences but also an increased frequency suggesting that change, fortune, first steps, and opportunity are significant to the experience of being a Black female leader. In addition to significant themes, unique themes are also important to the findings. These themes are those expressed by 7 participants or less, but add unique value to the findings. The unique themes of this section included but not limited to challenges, actualization, and support circulated throughout the interviews. The themes speak not only to leadership and success but also resilience. Specifically, Pully and Wakefield (2001) proposes nine interrelated areas that guide leaders in building resilience. The nine areas include “acceptance of change, continuous learning, self-empowerment, sense of purpose, personal identity, personal and professional networks, reflection, skill shifting, and your relationship with money” (p. 9). Additionally, Goleman (2000) suggests that self-actualization is one of the keys in leadership that gets results. The themes: change and self-actualization emerged throughout the current study, suggesting that resilience is a fact in leadership.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked: What are the leadership characteristics of Black Female Leaders? During the interview, significant themes that emerged included collaborator and autonomy, with 10 and eight occurrences respectively. Specifically, the participants indicated that they led with the team, and with the team in mind, and really utilized a hands-off approach especially when (a) working with people whom they



trusted, (b) who they knew could handle the work independently or, (c) who they felt needed autonomy in order to get the work done effectively. Additionally, three decision making processes surfaced including a two step process, a three step process, and a flexible decision-making style. The participants of the study also indicated what they value in decision-making. Themes that appeared included collaborative with six occurrences, consensus (building) with four incidences, results (orientated) with three occurrences, affect (on people), to teach (others), fairness, and fact(s). Hackman and Johnson (2004) suggest that interpersonal factors, like the ability to collaborate, are vital to successful leadership. This may be indicative of the successes of the Black female leaders studied. Goleman (2000) also suggests that affiliative or democratic styles have a positive “overall impact on the climate” (p. 82). Collaborative or team oriented statements with regard to leading surfaced throughout the interviews, suggesting consistence among and between the leaders. Further, the decision making processes seem logically, straightforward and consistent between the subjects. Hackman and Johnson advocate that “successful leaders are highly consistent in their behaviors and are therefore easy to trust” (p. 67).

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked: What are the assumptions of these leaders with regard to their followers? This research question spoke directly to the fact that you can’t lead without followers. Followers can be your team, your staff, your community, your colleagues, peers, or your higher ups depending on the power structure (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2011). The question, also, spoke directly to the expectations (assumption) of the leaders with regard to their followers by combining their

value system and day to day challenges concerning their employees. Significant themes included innovation (eight occurrences) and managing people (eight occurrences), with regard to the characteristics valued in followers and day to day challenges, respectively. A unique theme that surfaced in both areas was communication.

Innovation and leadership are the new themes of the organizations that are making the most profit and producing results. Kouzes and Barry (2002) assert that those who seek and value innovation and change are risk takers given that the price of innovation is “uncertainty, risk and mistakes” (p. 218). Despite this the women of this study value both innovation and the ability to communicate new ideas.

Managing people, according to Hackman and Johnson (2004), is the single most time consuming task for any leader and was identified as the significant challenge of the leaders of this study. According to Blair (n.d.), managing people is multifaceted. It includes balancing your behaviors with motivating the team, sound communication skills, giving recognitions, achieving goals, solving problems and promoting accountability, which are also unique themes of this question.

As difficult as this is, theorists argue that Black women, although subordinate in the hierarchal system, have been managing people astutely even during slavery, through Jim Crow and so on (Williams & Newman, 1970). However a stretch, one can argue the role of being a Black leader requires an abundant amount of skill in managing people that has been cultivated by years of being subordinate to their counterparts. The women leaders of this study managed to convey those qualities into their lived experiences by way of emphasizing communication and innovation in their followers as well as mastering their ability to manage up as P9 so eloquently shared:

The advantages come out of the first disadvantage that I talked about. That having the position where you may not be in charge or have the title; I think or my theory has always been that black women understand other folks better than anybody else. Go back to slavery, going back to Jim Crow and coming forward to pink collar jobs or what have you; if I am working under a white man or in a white woman's kitchen, for example, I have to understand what that man or woman needs me to do, what ticks them off and how to please him or her in order to be successful to get what I need to get. I need to know how to navigate those types of situation, for safety in some cases. I think that we still have the ability to understand the perspective of other people, because we've had to watch those other people. We've had to know what they wanted in order to become successful in those jobs (Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).

The task of managing people is difficult. The female leaders of the study emphasized a value system that promoted collaboration, accountability and communication in handling this day to day challenge with their followers.

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: How do these leaders view the role of women in leadership?

The themes *Any* and *Many* represented the collective idea behind the leaders' belief system with regard to the role of women. Suggestive of a collective view, which supports the idea that women don't have a particular "place" in leadership but deserve an opportunity to be in any position for which they qualify. The leaders also acknowledged that they have seen a movement of women leaders in the workforce. Supporting the

argument that organizations are becoming more diverse; expanding leadership opportunities regardless of gender, race, and ethnicity; in order to maintain a competitive edge (Hite, 2004). Leadership positions are being filled by women of color and glass ceiling practices are slowly being replaced by a movement of upward mobility for these women. This leads to the advantages and disadvantages women face in leadership positions, which according to the findings of this study include work life balance (disadvantage), as well as new perspective and nurture (advantage).

**Work life balance.** You can't mention leadership and women without mentioning work life balance. This theme was significant in this area of the study (having eight occurrences as a disadvantage) but also showed up throughout the raw data as a unique theme, frequently. The Black female leaders of the study, including the leaders who did not have children, expressed that one of the most significant disadvantage or challenge in leadership for women is work life balance. P1 expressed the collective idea as such:

At the same time, going back to when I say, women are starting to leave, overall, the professional workforce because women are finding that you can't have it all. You really can't have it all! You can't have it all on the terms that are currently set as the standard for having it all. The only way you can have it all is if you set your own terms for that. So that's what they are doing. There isn't necessarily a disadvantage to having women in a leadership position but I think you are finding fewer women who are really eligible for leadership positions because they are taking themselves out of the market. So it is really a disadvantage to the professional service industries more than it is a disadvantage to having women in leadership (Personal Communication, February, 21, 2013).

The findings support the notion that women have to be more flexible in managing their work and personal obligations than their male counterparts.

So for women there is a consciousness of the work life balance. I have heard women say “I just need a wife or where’s my wife?” because as a male you have that. I will say this, I am a single mother but my ex-husband has never missed a day of work because my child was sick, never. For a while my kid was sick a lot and was even hospitalized when she was three or four, he never missed a shift.

The superwoman stereotype in this case cultivates a culture of incompetence for the dad and we need to release some responsibilities (P9, Personal Communication, March 22, 2013).

Findings suggest that the research of Morrison (1997) is still true with regard to women having to juggle the balancing act of being a professional and a woman. The research also suggests that balancing the roles requires a clear support system which is thematically represented as a network, family, or support throughout the raw data of the study.

**New perspective.** According to Hite (2004) and Robbins and Judge (2011), organizations are realizing that women demonstrate superior leadership qualities in comparison to their male counterparts, thus offering increased performance in modern organizations, across racial and ethnic boundaries. The participants’ responses suggest confirmation of those previous findings because of new perspectives (women add new viewpoints to the discussion which may have been missing in leadership based on the experience of women in subordinate positions) had nine occurrences and showed up frequently throughout the discussion between the subjects.

**Nurturer.** The theme of nurturer as well as having a genuine care (thematic description-empathy and compassion for others) for employees surfaces frequently throughout the raw data. One of the participants said “I mean I am concerned about people and I care about people and how they feel...” (P4, Personal Communication, March 15, 2013). Rosener (1989) suggests that the way in which women lead is different than that of men. One of the biggest differences is the feelings and care aspect that set women apart. Women have managed to lead effectively and the findings of this study suggest that it is indeed advantageous for women to hold on to the “care” quality. In fact, Rosener states that “women managers who have broken the glass ceiling in medium-sized, nontraditional organizations have proven that effective leaders don’t come from one mold” (p. 5). P10 corroborates those findings by stating the following:

I think the role we really play in leadership is one we don't talk about a whole lot. I talked about us being in a new paradigm and that is women leading as women leaders. I think those of us who started out early on, were shaping ourselves to lead like men lead, so we didn't become good role models but I feel like we are ready now because we've learned from those experiences. Now, we don't even try to look how we used to look. We used to have to wear all those dark suits and white shirts and those little dark clothes to look like we blended in, but you don't see us trying to blend in that way anymore (Personal Communication, March 27, 2013).

The findings of this study also suggest that the Black female leaders rely on the care or nurturer aspect in leadership because it provides a sense of actualization as

opposed to trying to fit in the mold of men or white women. P11 expressed the collective notion by saying:

I just take care of everybody; that's all I do. For me, I call myself "the wise one." Not quite or less the mammy, but I more or less come off more as a Maya Angelou. People come into my office for a lot of advice and wisdom, as I am seen as the old, wise one. You know what, I just play into that. I go "yep" that's fine. I'm not gonna be anything else.... (Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

According to King and Ferguson (2011), black women are situated in a space to provide motherly leadership based on their position in society, their communities, and their families. They learn leadership from the women before them and develop "leadership per excellence" (p. 78).

#### **Research Question 4**

Research Question 4 asked: What barriers to career success do African American female leaders report as having to overcome? Collectively, there were nine occurrences suggesting that being an African American female or a woman posed specific barriers to the rise to the top of the leadership ranks. Although 5 participants suggested that they had a "charmed" ascent to the top, the majority felt the opposite. Research suggests that intersectionality poses additional hardship on women of color with regard to leadership in American based organizations and society (Crenshaw, 1994; King & Ferguson, 2011; Morrison, 1997; Stanley, 2009). The findings of this study support that notion. Still, in 2013, these Black female leaders experienced being the first, or the only, or one of a few women or African American women within their organization or industry. The leaders of

this study also struggle with stereotypes indicative of the nine occurrences and frequency throughout the interview. Specifically, the findings support that characteristic of Black female stereotypes impacts the Black female leaders' experience. Dobbs et al. (2008) explain that stereotypes like Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, Crazy Black Bitch, and Superwomen have had profound effects on African American females' outcomes in the workplace, despite their acquired professional and academic qualifications. Further, the present study suggests that these stereotypes could be both negative and positive.

Additionally, the more prevalent impact is the struggle with not owning the stereotypes as true which is thematically described as (buy in). This notion is evident throughout the interviews and is an aspect of the Black female leaders' experience. Some of the leaders suggested that they can't be so many of those images because it is counterproductive to their work effectiveness, while others suggest that some of the characteristics are vital to career success.

Additionally, the findings are indicative of the struggle in communication, which had 11 occurrences, and acts as a barrier and promotes the stereotypes. Communication thematically means, in this case, feeling as if candor is a downfall, which could lead to the perception of Black female leaders as aggressive. P8 describes the turn of events as such:

These female stereotypes do impact us, meaning, because they can prevent you from moving forward, they can prevent you from being respected, they can prevent you from having opportunities. As a Black female, when I get an opportunity to give any type of developmental comment, I make sure they hear me loud and clear. Because it will intimidate people which can prevent your



opportunities. Some of these individuals have not had leadership in their lives that try to give them alternatives or teach them to how to use, let's say the Jezebel for example the seductress, and how to use that as negotiation skills without the sexuality. And teaching them what their strength is and how to use your strengths. There is a mentoring, teaching, and educational part missing just like the lack of emotional maturity in those stereotypes (Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

The notion of mentoring and teaching bring us to Research Question 5 which covers mentoring as an aspect to career success.

### **Research Question 5**

Research Question 5 asked: How do African American women overcome barriers to career success? Opportunity was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. The participants believed that in general they had the same opportunities as their male and female counterparts. Moreover, the subjects' faith, work ethic, sound network, mentors, and preparedness help to promote continued career success.

These findings support King and Ferguson (2011) and Morrison's (1997) notion that suggests that the Black woman's faith and spirituality is a foundation in providing balance, actualization, positive outlook, and drive that promote productivity. The theme faith appeared multiple times throughout the raw data. Morrison suggests that "what these experts are calling emotional intelligent, Black people call soul-and we have always had soul" (p. 193).

Mentoring and networking were frequent themes not just in this section of the research but also throughout the raw data. For example:

I would say more than the biases and more than stereotypes, I would say the lack of mentorship is definitely the more significant limitation. Not having someone to turn to who has been through it before or someone who could give insight that was far much more of a limitation, I would say, than anything else (P13, Personal Communication, March 29, 2013).

Previous research suggests that mentorship opportunities must be available in order to encourage female leadership development and to narrow the gap between men and women (Bass, 2009; Brown et al., 2010; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). One idea that rang vital in this study among the participants was that although there may not be Black female leaders that are mentors readily accessible, men or other women can be assets in this area. Many of the participants alluded to the benefits of having mentors that were not African American and/or female.

One of my trusted advisors and mentor is a red headed, theology undergrad, professional gambler, CEO of a tech company, white male, who became one of my trusted advisers and mentor. We would often joist about this quite often that I didn't need a mentor who looked like me, because we understood each other. I actually needed a mentor who didn't look like me and he would have the key to the board room, because I would change that person's perspective and change their optical view and the same would happen in return. So I think that there is somewhat of a fallacy there that your mentor needs to look like you. In order to open up the door of inclusion, your mentor shouldn't look like you (P14, Personal Communication, March 30, 2013).

There was also an idea that mentorship or networks are not as accessible to the Black female leaders as they probably would be to their female and male counterparts. Despite this, these findings suggest that engendering a mentor/mentee relationship, is both intrinsically and extrinsically positive to the Black female leader's experience.

### **Research Question 6**

Research Question 6 asked: What are the factors required to retain career success? The study findings suggest that both personal factors and organizational factors are important to career success.

Personal factors that are unique themes include but are not limited to mistakes, awareness, sharing, and negotiation.

Morrison (1997) suggested that Black women leaders generally have a fear of failure, which drives their work ethic. However, the present study supports Hackman and Johnson's (2004) assertion that successful leaders learn from their mistakes. In fact, the African American leaders of this study often found it useful in retention of success to make mistakes and learn from them. Just to be clear, the leaders of this study asserted that they don't actively seek failure or mistakes but regard the infrequent occurrence of mistakes as a learning tool that guides learning and problem solving. Just as mistakes promote continuous growth, so too does sharing and negotiation. Research of women and communication styles suggests that negotiation may not be a gender specific quality for women (Hackman & Johnson, 2004), however many of the leaders in this study mentioned understanding their value and market positions and their ability to communicate it to others effectively, by way of negotiating. In that, negotiation skills proved vital to continued career success. In addition to negotiation, the idea of sharing

was also vital to the Black female leadership experience. For example, the leaders felt it a duty or responsibility to “let the ladder down” when in a position of leadership. This finding supports King and Ferguson’s (2011) assertions that regard Black women leaders as the gate keeper and trendsetters.

Because intersectionality places Black women in a position of triple jeopardy when it comes to the negative effects of organizational culture and structure, it is vital that organizations cultivate a culture of inclusion and diversity, in order to promote success. Organizational factors that appeared as unique themes include but are not limited to cultivation and diversity. Hackman and Johnson (2004), Robbins and Judge (2011), Rosener (1989), Ruderman and Ohlott (2004) suggest that nontraditional leadership is effective in organizations that welcome it and prove detrimental to organizations that are complacent in the “one best way” frame of mind.

### **Research Question 7 and the Hypothesis**

Research Question 7 asked: What level of resilience is needed in such leadership positions in order to succeed? The African American female leaders of this study had a mean resilience score of 84.6, which is fairly high resilience ability based on the CD-RISC. Again, the CD-RISC is a 25-item scale evaluating resilience, with higher scores indicating higher resilience ability. Each item is rated on a 5-point range of answers from not true at all (0) to true nearly all the time (4). The total score can fall between 0–100. Other factors that promote resilience for these leaders include having a philosophy that guides them, a generally positive outlook, and faith in a higher power. In addition to these themes being significant or unique, they reoccurred frequently throughout the interview transcripts.

Recall, the hypothesis of this study was there is a difference in resilience for African American leaders compared to the general population of people having undertaken the particular resilience scale. Again, national mean of a random sample of participants in the U.S., utilizing the same instrument was 80.4. With this information, a one sample t-test was undertaken in order to compare the means of the two groups. The mean score of the participants in this study was 84.86 with a standard deviation of roughly 8.86. The  $t$  value= 1.88 and the  $p$ = .08. With this  $p$  value, one can assert that the results are marginally significant, with  $p < .10$ . This lack of significance may be due to the small size of the sample ( $N=14$ ) or it may reflect no difference in the population. Research with larger samples is recommended to decide between these competing explanations.

Hackman and Johnson (2004) suggest that transitions and creating change are two experiences that are “extremely helpful in developing leadership abilities” (p. 347). Additionally, research on resilience suggests that the ability to adapt to change is a major characteristic of resilience (Pully & Wakefield, 2001). All of the women in the study experienced change and transition personally (whether they lost a husband, child, or loved one), socially (having to adapt and build additional networks due to moves related to positions), and professionally (having the courage to start a new position, company, being the first woman or Black woman, or to leave a position). Change was an overarching theme of the experience of being a Black female leader. The leaders often adapted or accepted change speaking to not only their leadership qualities and their resilience abilities, but also to the experience of being an African American female leader. The findings may support King and Ferguson’s (2011) assertion that “such

legacies of Black history and African cultural derivatives may have afforded African American women some degree of resilience that some European American women may lack” (p. 39). These findings may also support the presence of all three frameworks (i.e. characteristics of resilience, resilience as a process and innate resilience) of resilience. Supplementary research is recommended in order to explain the phenomenon further.

### **Additional Comments**

Again, black female leaders have been cited to have both transformational and servant leadership characteristics depending on the author (Brown et al., 2010; King & Ferguson, 2011). Although some research cautions against mistaking servant leadership qualities for the Black female leadership (Brown et al., 2010; Dobbs et al., 2008), there are studies that suggest that Black female leaders are situated socially, spiritually, emotionally, and ethnically in a place where they must rely on those very leadership qualities to survive, sustain, and grow (Armstrong, 2007; Bass, 2009; King & Ferguson, 2011; Washington, 2006). Based on this research, one can assert that black female leadership qualities do overlap with the characteristics of both servant and transformational leadership. The women of this study stressed a genuine “ethic of care”, yet they also spoke adamantly about being vision driven and committed to the outcomes of their organizations and team. Based on these findings, one could not lump these women into a specific leadership style. However, these findings support the research of King and Ferguson (2011), Bass (2009), Washington (2006) and Armstrong (2007) that suggest that black women leaders have a predisposition to be servant, spiritual, and emotionally connected to their positions and followers (leadership). In this case, these very qualities have been advantageous for the leaders of this study.

The communication theme came up frequently throughout the interviews and was either a significant theme or unique theme, but also spoke to the overarching experience. Specifically, the participants collectively highlighted balancing their candor with the culture of traditionally male dominated, especially white male dominated, organizations or industries. In *Culture of Candor*, Bennis, Goleman, and O'Toole (2008) elaborate on communicating candidly and promote the culture of transparency in organizations. They celebrate the whistleblower and assert that information should be a free flowing phenomenon in organizational leadership regardless of its nature. In doing so, the leader welcomes honesty and is proactive as opposed to using communication as an "intervention." However beneficial, Bennis et al., (2008) suggest candor is to the overall productivity of the organization, the Black women of this study report having to tread a fine line in order to balance their naturally candid communication style with the culture of "secrecy, beating around the bush and indirectness" that traditionally male dominated organizations and industries promote. Resulting in having to silence themselves, so that they are not automatically lumped in the crazy Black bitch or the sapphire stereotype, for merely being bold, open, and assertive. So in essence there is a catch-22.

Recall, this research was informed by the resilience development model (RDM), Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory (See FIGURE 1). In applying the RDM, it proposes that people (in this case African American female leaders) have innate resilience that is developed by processes (e.g. education, training, actualization, support networks), which are activated by adversity (e.g. intersectionality, stereotypes, concrete ceiling practices, failure etc.). Ultimately, triggering coping strategies (faith, mentors, support networks, etc.) or adaptation, which reduce the negative impact of adversities,

thus improving the positive outcomes (productivity and success in traditionally White male dominated industries and workplaces (Grafton et al., 2010). The women of this study experienced hardship given their intersectionality and utilized coping strategies like faith and mentors to adapt to their environments and to promote advancement and growth in the workplace.

Utilizing the resilience development model as a vehicle, this research provides insight into the multidimensional reality of Black female leaders' experience in the workplace. In doing so, the study challenges traditional ideas of Black female leaders and provides advocacy in the form of information and transformative recommendations to Black women, and to organizations, which is in line with the advocacy and participatory paradigm imbedded in both Black Feminist Theory and CRT (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

### **Limitation**

The African American female leadership experience is not monolithic and cannot be told entirely by 14 women. This study is beneficial, because it provides a clear picture of the experiences of the 14 participants and both adds to and supports literature in the area of leadership and resilience.

### **Implications**

The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resilience of African American women in order to develop a blueprint for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for female leaders. These two goals drive the implication section.



**To Future African American Female Leaders:**

- Be yourself in leadership
- Let professionalism, awareness, and instinct guide you in leadership
- Take every opportunity to add value to your skillset whether it is through education, training programs, or broadening your work experience.
- Know your value. When you are underappreciated and have the opportunity to leave muster up the courage to do so
- Be prepared to work twice as hard
- Confidence is not conceit and it is a value in leadership
- You never know when you're entertaining an angel so treat everyone kind (Merle Nobles)
- Actively seek the advice of others, use them as sounding boards
- Mentors can be useful to success and it is beneficial to build a diverse reservoir of mentors
- Networks and social capital is important in business, so build them early
- Build a support system in family and friends in order to secure a balance in your day to day life
- Faith and a positive outlook goes a long way
- "Understand your audience; everyone doesn't hear the same way" (P8, Personal Communication, March 26, 2013).
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes; use them as tools but don't actively seek failure.
- "You gotta stay three steps ahead. So when the man pushes you back two, you're

still one step ahead” (P11, Personal Communication, March 28, 2013).

- In the words of P2 “you can get anything done if you don’t care who gets the glory” (Personal Communication, March 13, 2013).
- “Leave the ladder down and bring someone with you” (P7, Personal Communication, March 25, 2013).

### **Recommendations for Practices**

Diversifying the traditionally male dominated industries and businesses has been a challenge since early 1900’s. American based organization has been making strides however this research suggests that we are still far behind. The study also advocates that Black women bring a perspective that is missing in the boardrooms. To both of the points, P1 stated that “I think sometimes, companies lose sight of the different voices that are within the company that can bring value to the strategic process; the decision making process. People tend to gravitate to people who are like them” (Personal Communication, February 21, 2013). This research support that of Hackman and Johnson (2004) & Ruderman and Ohlott (2004), which asserts that diversity promotes cost effectiveness, brand expansion, improved decision making and superior innovation. It also supports the findings of Rosener (1989) and Robbins and Judge (2011), which purports that women are superior communicators, collaborators and motivators that benefit overall productivity. Recommendations to organizations based on the current study findings include:

- Invest in mentorship and leadership development programs
- When training staff on the day to day operations include curriculum on communication and interpersonal skill building

- Include shift rotations, flextime, teleworking and job sharing as employee options in order to include women; as a whole these opportunities increase morale and suggest that employees are valued (Byrne, 2005).
- Cultivate staff by adding rewards and recognition programs to the organization's culture
- There's is no better way to diversify than by being inclusive and diverse. A way to do so is aggressive recruitment for women
- Women add value to the bottom line, in most markets and industries; women are the driver, so open up to hearing their perspective by making room at the table for women, particularly women of color

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study offered some interesting and enlightening findings. However, African American Female leadership is such a limited area in the discussion of organizational leadership and behavior. There are many additional avenues that warrant academic attention including but not limited to:

- Taking a closer look at self-actualization and leadership through the lens of women of color
- Expand the current study by including more participants, particularly utilizing the CD-RISC to assess resilience in a larger sample of African American female leaders
- A longitudinal study that assesses leadership and resilience
- A comparative study that includes both males and females, women of color and their counterparts assessing resilience and leadership style

- A case study that follows the day to day of Ursula Burns (i.e. the only American based African American CEO of a fortune 500 company)
- Assess the concept of “having it all” from the perspective of successful female leaders
- Investigate Black Greek sorority involvement and successful African American leaders
- A comparative analysis that compares the communication style of African American female leaders and their female and male counterparts
- A comparative analysis of resilience, using the CD-RISC, comparing four subgroups of leaders in high ranking positions
- Assess the mentorship programs in American based organizations, the prevalence and effectiveness using a random sample of fortune 100, 500, and 1000 companies

### **Researcher’s Thoughts**

The collective experience of the participants still baffles me. I felt as if I was listening to myself, my mother, my sister, my mentor, and in some cases a good friend. Their willingness to be forthcoming, given their positions, took courage and a grave understanding of the need to promote awareness and education in this area.

Overcoming barriers, experiencing success, and climbing to the highest ranks in traditional male dominated fields and businesses, is no easy feat. The point of the matter remains, resilience and leadership is the very essence of being extraordinarily successful. Many of the women told stories of hardship but a few gave views into their “charmed” career experiences where their intersectionality coupled with opportunity, networks, and

timing helped “because it was different.”

In the 40’s and 50’s, women, particularly Black women, in ranks such as the participants were considered offensive to many. Despite this, women continue to become more educated and gain more experience, as a whole, in order to be amidst those trailblazers who were amongst the “few and only.” Although concrete or glass ceiling practices, biases and discrimination is far less frequent and blatant than in the past, it still exists because numbers don’t lie. In the words of one of the phenomenal participants “I should not be the first Black person or the first Black woman in this business in 2013.” It will take a collective effort to be inclusive and acculturate industries, organizations, and people to the way of the future, which is to include women and people of color in the decision making, leadership ranks. The hope of this study is to add to that effort.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Consent Form

### Attachment 3 - Informed Consent

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to allow us to use the information we gain in our conversation with you today in our dissertation research and scholarly work at Pepperdine University.

The purpose of our conversation today is to learn about your leadership characteristics, style, and level of resilience. This study will allow us, and those who read our research, to gain a better understanding of leadership styles and approaches and resilience of leaders in your field. In order for me/us to use what we learn from you today in our research and publications, our University requires that I read to you the following statement and ask for your permission. I would like to ask you if you would agree with the following arrangements:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to permit the researchers to refer to me (please initial) only by a pseudonym from a “generic organization” e.g., Dr. Jones, President of medium size community college. I understand my identity and the name of my organization will be kept confidential at all times and in all circumstances any research based on this interview is presented.

You should be aware that your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with me/this group or Pepperdine University or \_\_\_\_\_. Upon your request, I will provide a copy of any published papers or professional presentations that take place as a result of this interview.

With your permission, I will be recording this interview. Please feel free to ask us to stop or resume taping this discussion at any point in our conversation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I will be audio taped if I decide to participate in this study. The tapes will be used for research purposes only. The tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet, maintained by the researcher, and will be destroyed five years after the study is completed.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the potential risks of participating in this study are minimal such as excitement, fatigue, boredom, and in the event that I do experience such, a rest break will be provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand there is no direct benefit from participation in this study however; the social science benefit(s) to the academic community may include knowledge and information about the experience. This will add to the body of knowledge about this subject, which presently is limited.

Please feel free to ask any questions about this study before we begin or during our conversation. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Dr. James DellaNeve Chairperson at 310-251-8428 ([james.dellaneve@pepperdine.edu](mailto:james.dellaneve@pepperdine.edu)), or Doug Leigh, Ph.D.Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB, [Doug.Leigh@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Doug.Leigh@pepperdine.edu), 310-568-2389.

At this point, I am required to ask you if you fully understood my statements and if so, to initial next to the category that applies to you and sign this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

## APPENDIX B

## CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

### Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Curriculum Completion Report

Printed on 2/11/2011

**Learner:** Shanetta Robinson (username: shanettarobinson)

**Institution:** Pepperdine University

**Contact Information**

Department: GSEP

Phone:

Email:

shanetta.robinson@pepperdine.edu

**Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research:** This course is for investigators, staff and students with an interest or focus in **Social and Behavioral** research. This course contains text, embedded case studies AND quizzes.

#### Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 02/11/11 (Ref # 5620122)

Elective Modules	Date Completed	Score
Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research	02/11/11	no quiz
Research Misconduct 2-1495	02/11/11	4/5 (80%)
Data Acquisition, Management, Sharing and Ownership 2-1523	02/11/11	4/5 (80%)
Publication Practices and Responsible Authorship 2-1518	02/11/11	5/5 (100%)
Peer Review 2-1521	02/11/11	5/5 (100%)
Mentor and Trainee Responsibilities 01234 1250	02/11/11	6/6 (100%)
Animal Welfare 13301	02/11/11	7/8 (88%)
Conflicts of Interest and Commitment 2-1462	02/11/11	5/6 (83%)
Collaborative Research 2-1484	02/11/11	5/6 (83%)

Human Subjects 13566	02/11/11	9/11 (82%)
The CITI RCR Course Completion Page.	02/11/11	no quiz

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.**

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Miami  
Director Office of Research Education  
CITI Course Coordinator

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol



## Interview Protocol

The purpose of the research is to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership appointments. The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resiliency of African American women in order to provide blueprints for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for female leaders

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in position: \_\_\_\_\_

Current industry: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Introduction (briefly describe the project)

- i. Thank participant
- ii. Explain interview process, taping, note taking, and confidentiality
- iii. Inquire if participant has any questions

II. Demographic Information

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of hours worked per week \_\_\_\_\_

Children (number & ages) \_\_\_\_\_

Education level: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's education level: \_\_\_\_\_

III. Collect the CD-RISD if participants haven't already emailed or mailed the document in

IV. Interview questions

1. Tell me a little about your career.
2. What were some of the obstacles you have faced in your career?
3. How would you describe your leadership style?
4. What leadership characteristics do you value in your employees?
5. What challenges do you face in your day-to-day dealings with your employees?
6. Describe to us your decision-making process. For example, when your staff brings to your attention a problem, how do you go about selecting a solution?
7. What role do you see women playing in leadership and what advantage or disadvantages do women face in leadership positions?
8. Do you feel your rise to the top was harder, as a Black female?
9. Do Black female leader's stereotypes impact you?

<b><u>Images</u></b>	<b><u>Characteristics</u></b>
Mammy	Motherly, loyal, self-sacrificing, servant, nurturing
Jezebel	Seductive, flirty, promiscuous, hypersexual, manipulative
Sapphire	Loud, overly assertive, talkative, dramatic, bossy, angry, wisecracking, complainer
Crazy Black Bitch	Crazy, unstable, angry, vindictive, aggressive, defensive, untrusting of others

Superwoman	Overachiever, intelligent, articulate, professional, assertive
------------	--

10. Did you encounter any limitations including stereotypes, concrete ceiling practices, minimal opportunities for mentorship and biases because you are a Black female?
11. Do you think you have the same opportunities as your female and male counterparts?
12. How do you feel you overcame barriers to career success?
13. Are there other aspects of leadership that you feel impacts your experience as a Black female leader?
14. How do you feel organizational factors impact your leadership experience?
15. Do you have a philosophy that guides you in your day to day?
16. When you have experience difficult time, how would you say you've gotten through them?
17. What is your overall outlook of life? Are you one who tends to see the glass half empty or half full?
18. How would people you know say you respond to difficult situations?
19. As you look at your life what would you say set you apart from anyone else?

I. Closing

- i. Is there anything you would like to add?
- ii. Assure participant of confidentiality, if requested
- iii. Thank participant

APPENDIX D

Invitation Letter

## Initiation Letter

Date

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this project. Below you will find detailed information about the scope of the projects.

### Background & Purpose

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the dissertation phase of my Educational Doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University.

The title of my dissertation is African American Female Leaders: Resilience and Success. The purpose of the research is to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership appointments. The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resiliency of African American women in order to provide blueprints for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for female leaders.

This section provides a brief description of your involvement. The steps are as follows:

- You will be issued an informed consent that will stipulate my responsibilities related to human protection and confidentiality.
- Once you sign and agree to the terms of the informed consent, I will contact you in order schedule your interview and send you the CD-RISC. The CD-RISC is a 25 item questionnaire on a 5 point scale. Completion of the CD-RISC requires less than 20 minutes. The interview consists of 19 questions related to leadership, success, being a Black women and resilience. The entire interview should not take longer than an hour and can be conducted face-to-face, via Skype or phone conference.

Please see the informed consent or contact me directly if you have any questions related to the projects.

Thank You

Shanetta Robinson-MPA  
Doctoral candidate of Organizational Leadership  
Graduate School of Education & Psychology  
Pepperdine University

APPENDIX E

CD-RISC-25

## Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 25 (CD-RISC-25)

initials  ID#  date / visit  age

For each item, please mark an "x" in the box below that best indicates how much you agree with the following statements as they apply to you over the last month. If a particular situation has not occurred recently, answer according to how you think you would have felt.

	not true at all (0)	rarely true (1)	sometimes true (2)	often true (3)	true all the time (4)
1. I am able to adapt when changes occur.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have at least one close and secure relationship that helps me when I am stressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. When there are no clear solutions to my problems, sometimes fate or God can help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I can deal with whatever comes my way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Past successes give me confidence in dealing with new challenges and difficulties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Even when things look hopeless, I don't give up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I prefer to take the lead in solving problems rather than letting others make all the decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I am not easily discouraged by failure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I can make unpopular or difficult decisions that affect other people, if it is necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. In dealing with life's problems, sometimes you have to act on a hunch without knowing why.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I have a strong sense of purpose in life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I feel in control of my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I like challenges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I work to attain my goals no matter what roadblocks I encounter along the way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I take pride in my achievements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from Dr. Davidson at [mail@cd-risc.com](mailto:mail@cd-risc.com). Further information about the scale and terms of use can be found at [www.cd-risc.com](http://www.cd-risc.com). Copyright © 2001, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011 by Kathryn M. Connor, M.D., and Jonathan R.T. Davidson.

APPENDIX F

Terms of Agreement



Dear Shanetta:

Thank you for your interest in the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). We are pleased to grant permission for use of the CD-RISC in the project you have described under the following terms of agreement:

1. You agree not to use the CD-RISC for any commercial purpose, or in research or other work performed for a third party, or provide the scale to a third party. If other off-site collaborators are involved with your project, their use of the scale is restricted to the project, and the signatory of this agreement is responsible for ensuring that all collaborators adhere to the terms of this agreement.
2. You may use the CD-RISC in written form, by telephone, or in secure electronic format whereby the scale is protected from unauthorized distribution or the possibility of modification.
3. Further information on the CD-RISC can be found at the [www.cd-risc.com](http://www.cd-risc.com) website. The scale's content may not be modified, although in some circumstances the formatting may be adapted with permission of either Dr. Connor or Dr. Davidson. If you wish to create a non-English language translation or culturally modified version of the CD-RISC, please let us know and we will provide details of the standard procedures.
4. Three forms of the scale exist: the original 25 item version and two shorter versions of 10 and 2 items respectively. When using the CD-RISC 25, CD-RISC 10 or CD-RISC 2, whether in English or other language, please include the full copyright statement and use restrictions as it appears on the scale.
5. A fee of \$ 25 US is payable to Jonathan Davidson at 3068 Baywood Drive, Seabrook Island, SC 29455, USA, either by PayPal, cheque, bank draft, international money order or Western Union. (Please note: An additional \$16 fee is charged for bank wire transfers).
6. Complete and return this form via email to [mail@cd-risc.com](mailto:mail@cd-risc.com).
7. In any publication or report resulting from use of the CD-RISC, you do not publish or partially reproduce the CD-RISC without first securing permission from the authors.

If you agree to the terms of this agreement, please email a signed copy to the above email address. Upon receipt of the signed agreement and of payment, we will email a copy of the scale.

For questions regarding use of the CD-RISC, please contact Jonathan Davidson at [mail@cd-risc.com](mailto:mail@cd-risc.com). We wish you well in pursuing your goals.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan R. T. Davidson, M.D.  
Kathryn M. Connor, M.D.

Agreed to by:

 10.30.2012  
Signature (printed) Date

Shanetta Robinson Student  
Title

Pepperdine University - Graduate School of Education & Psychology  
Organization

APPENDIX G

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about your career.
2. What were some of the obstacles you have faced in your career?
3. How would you describe your leadership style?
4. What leadership characteristics do you value in your employees?
5. What challenges do you face in your day-to-day dealings with your employees?
6. Describe to us your decision-making process. For example, when your staff brings to your attention a problem, how do you go about selecting a solution?
7. What role do you see women playing in leadership and what advantage or disadvantages do women face in leadership positions?
8. Do you feel your rise to the top was harder, as a Black female?
9. Do Black female leader's stereotypes impact you?

<b><u>Images</u></b>	<b><u>Characteristics</u></b>
Mammy	Motherly, loyal, self-sacrificing, servant, nurturing
Jezebel	Seductive, flirty, promiscuous, hypersexual, manipulative
Sapphire	Loud, overly assertive, talkative, dramatic, bossy, angry, wisecracking, complainer
Crazy Black Bitch	Crazy, unstable, angry, vindictive, aggressive, defensive, untrusting of others
Superwoman	Overachiever, intelligent, articulate, professional, assertive

10. Did you encounter any limitations including stereotypes, concrete ceiling practices, minimal opportunities for mentorship and biases because you are a Black female?
11. Do you think you have the same opportunities as your female and male counterparts?
12. How do you feel you overcame barriers to career success?
13. Are there other aspects of leadership that you feel impacts your experience as a Black female leader?
14. How do you feel organizational factors impact your leadership experience?
15. Do you have a philosophy that guides you in your day to day?
16. When you have experience difficult time, how would you say you've gotten through them?
17. What is your overall outlook of life? Are you one who tends to see the glass half empty or half full?
18. How would people you know say you respond to difficult situations?

19. As you look at your life what would you say set you apart from anyone else?

APPENDIX H

Research/Interview Questions' Logic

**Research/Interview Questions Logic**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
Profile Question	Tell me a little about your career
1. What are the leadership characteristics of Black female leaders?	How would you describe your leadership style?
	Describe to us your decision-making process. For example, when your staff brings to your attention a problem, how do you go about selecting a solution?
2. What are the assumptions of these leaders with regard to their followers?	What leadership characteristics do you value in your employees?
	What challenges do you face in your day-to-day dealings with your employees?
3. How do these leaders view the role of women in leadership?	What role do you see women playing in leadership and what advantage or disadvantages do women face in leadership positions?
4. What barriers to career success do African American female leaders report as having to overcome	Do you feel your rise to the top was harder, as a black female?
	What were some of the obstacles you have faced in your career?
	Do black female leader's stereotypes impact you?
	Did you encounter any limitations including stereotypes, concrete ceiling practices, minimal opportunities for mentorship and biases because you are a black female?
5. How do African American women overcome barriers to career success?	Do you think you have the same opportunities as your female and male counterparts?
	How do you feel you overcame barriers to

	career success?
6. What are the factors required to retain career success?	Are there other aspects of leadership that you feel impacts your experience as a black female leader?
	How do you feel organizational factors impact your leadership experience?
7. What level of resilience is needed in such leadership positions in order to succeed?	Do you have a philosophy that guides you in your day to day?
	When you have experience difficult time, how would you say you've gotten through them?
	What is your overall outlook of life? Are you one who tends to see the glass half empty or half full?
	How would people you know say you respond to difficult situations?
	As you look at your life what would you say set you apart from anyone else

APPENDIX I

List of Scripts



## APPENDIX I

## List of Scripts

Email Wording/Script – Initial Recruitment

## Option 1. No word limit:

I am a Doctoral candidate of Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology in the dissertation phase of the program. My dissertation focus is on African American female leadership, success strategies and resilience. I will be seeking female leaders who identify as black and who hold high ranking positions in traditionally male dominated industries or business to participate in the study. The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire towards entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resilience of African American women in order to develop a blueprint for organizational and human resource development strategies that promote diversity and advancement for female leaders. If you are interested in participating or know of anyone who could participate please contact me directly.

## Option 2. For site that require less than 500 words:

I am a Doctoral candidate in the dissertation phase of the program. My dissertation focus is on African American female leadership, success strategies and resilience. I will be seeking female leaders who identify as black and who hold high ranking positions in traditionally male dominated industries or businesses to participate in a study. The goal of the research is to provide a guide for women and to provide a blueprint that promotes diversity and advancement for female leaders. If you are interested in participating or believe you may know someone who could participate please contact me

Participant Recruitment Script

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a doctoral student in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I am conducting a study on African American female leadership, success strategies and resilience. I am interested in interviewing women who identify as black and who work in industries that are traditionally male dominated like business, finance or construction, to name a few. The women must hold or have held a high ranking position in this field and is considered an executive and among those in the c-suite.

You (\_\_\_\_\_) have been identified to participate in the study. Participation in the study is voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity are maintained to your satisfaction. Participation entails completion of a survey that can be completed manually or through survey monkey and an approximately 45 minute interview. Questions asked

in the interview and an informed consent form will be sent to you in advance of the interview.

Your participation in this study will be extremely valuable to new and aspiring women executives as well as other scholars and practitioners in the fields of leadership, business, and other social science fields.

Would you be willing to be interviewed as part of this study?

APPENDIX J

Validity Questionnaire Cover Letter

## APPENDIX J

## Validity Questionnaire Cover Letter

Date:

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to exercise your expertise and provide feedback for my survey instrument. Below you will find detailed information about the scope of the project and your involvement.

Background & Purpose

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the dissertation phase of my Educational Doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University.

The title of my dissertation is African American Female Leaders: Resilience and Success. The purpose of the research is to identify those factors that increase achievement, advancement and success in high ranking executive positions despite the documented hardships associated with African American women, who hold leadership appointments. The goal of this research is twofold. First, to provide a guide for women who aspire toward entering particular fields and holding similar leadership roles. Secondly, to provide an outline of the success, advancement and resiliency of African American women in order to provide blueprints for organizational strategies to promote diversity and advancement for female leaders.

Involvement

Please review the survey attached. Answer one question at a time using the validity-rating questionnaire, which is also attached. As you read each survey question, please indicate that Yes, this survey question will help answer the research questions or No this survey question will not help answer the research questions. In addition, indicate whether the item is well written and understandable. If you mark No, please make a suggestion that (a) I omit the survey question or (b) how I might modify the question.

Your input is invaluable, please return the validity questionnaire via email within one week of receipt, as it is time sensitive. This time frame will afford me the opportunity to make necessary changes to the instrument and implement your recommendations and suggestions prior to launching the survey, in a timely fashion. Please attach a copy of your resume along with the document.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Shanetta Robinson-MPA  
Doctoral candidate of Organizational Leadership  
Graduate School of Education & Psychology

APPENDIX K

Criteria for Selecting Panel of Experts

## APPENDIX K

## Criteria for Selecting Panel of Experts

According to Dr. Michelle Rosensitto's (1999) criteria for selecting a panel of experts, to ensure the validity of the interview instrument include the following:

1. Each of the judges are employed by a university must possess an earned academic doctoral degree and those who are employed by community or junior colleges must possess an earned academic Master's degree.
2. A minimum of one of the must hold a degree in one of the four academic discipline groups: Education, Psychology and Social Sciences Humanities, and the Arts and Sciences.
3. 50% of the judges on this panel were not known personally by the researcher. (Rosensitto, 1999, p. 104)

APPENDIX L

Validity Rating Questionnaire

## APPENDIX L

## Validity Rating Questionnaire

Survey Item	Is This Question Clear?		Recommendations and/or Suggestions to Improve the Question
	Yes	No	
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			



APPENDIX M

IRB Approval Letter

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

February 19, 2013

Shanetta K. Robinson  
9210 Bloomfield Ave. Apt#111  
Cypress, CA 90630

**Protocol #: E0113D09**

**Project Title: African American Female Leaders: Resilience and Success**

Dear Ms. Robinson,

Thank you for submitting the revisions requested by Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools IRB (GPS IRB) for your study, *African American Female Leaders: Resilience and Success*. The IRB has reviewed your revisions and found them acceptable. You may proceed with your study. The IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html> that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Doug Leigh, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education & Psychology  
6100 Center Dr. 5th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
[Doug.Leigh@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Doug.Leigh@pepperdine.edu)  
W: 310-568-2389  
F: 310-568-5755

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives  
Ms. Alexandra Roosa, Director Research and Sponsored Programs  
Dr. James DellaNeve, Graduate School of Education and Psychology

APPENDIX N

Code Sheet

**Codes – African American Female Leaders: Resilience and Success**

**Profile Question / Interview Question # 1 – Own Code (meaning this question provide codes that are unique to profiling the subjects)**

**Question 1- Profile Question**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Textual or Structural Description</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Change	Experienced change(s) either within current position or throughout career either professionally or personally.	12
Fortune	Experienced or expressed the feeling of being lucky or fortunate, grateful, love for, or admiration for either the career or the career journey.	10
First Steps	Expressed a “had to start somewhere” attitude meaning had to start somewhere in order to get the eventual career or position including having to attain additional education, training or work experience (characterized by being the initial step prior to eventual position).	9
Opportunity	Expressed having sought opportunity in career or on career journey which includes but is not limited to education, training, and work experience.	8
Challenge(s)	Experienced or expressed challenge or hardship or high levels of responsibility either because of the profession or within the career/career journey	7
Qualities	Expressed or experienced career self-actualization/realization or self-worth through quality identification either externally or internally	7
First Woman	Experienced or expressed being the first women or African American with in the tenure, career, or environment.	5
Interest	Expressed having sought careers that were aligned with interest or one where a connection was felt either in the career or career journey.	5
Goal(s)	Expressed or experienced career path guided by future or present goals or a clear expression or understanding of goal(s) or path	4
Beyond Imagination	Experienced or expressed never expecting to ascertain a level of success or to be in the specific career or on such career path.	4
Entrepreneur	Expressed and experienced having started or pioneered a business or new avenue in career or career journey	3

Support	Experienced or expressed receiving encouragement from supporters or mentors or even indirectly by an idol.	2
Respect	Expressed having sought respect while in position or a respectful position in general	1

**Interview Question # 3 & # 6– Share Code (meaning this question provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 1)**

### Question 3

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Collaborator	Expressed a desire to be inclusive, for group involvement, or for people to have input in decision making, to work together and critical thinking	10
Autonomy	Expressed a desire or a preference to step back and let people for their work/jobs and for employees who don't need a lot of direction	8
Rewarder	Expressed a desire to give positive feedback or reinforcement and encouragement or to commend staff, flowers and/or employees	6
Result Driven	Expressed or desire attention to results or outcomes “getting work done” or maximizing production	6
Teacher	Expressed a desire to help follower learn or grow and/or educate, advise, and/or mentor staff, subordinates, team and employees	5
Care	Expressed a desire to care or a genuine caring for people their feeling or situations by being kind, protective and/or supportive	5
Direct	Expressed a communication style that is straightforward and to the point as well as consistent	4
Mediator	Expressed a desire or ability to bring to agreement or intervene or promote consensus	4
Fun	Experienced or expressed a desire to display or displayed enjoyment, amusement and/or light hearted pleasure	3
Expectation	Expressed a need to or an awareness of own expectation	3
Explanatory	Expressed a desire or serving to explain “why”	2
Selective	Express a need or desire to select the “right” people for the work/job or an awareness of talent	2

	in people “people orientated”	
Trust	Expressed a desire to engender trust or build trust	2
Delegate	Ability to entrust task to others	2
Examiner	Expressed a need to check product or input in order to manage staff or team	2
Communicator	Expressed a desire or ability to communicate with team	2
Passion	Expressed a sense of outburst or emotion for work/job	2
Listener	Expressed a desire to seek understanding and expression of issues or lack of comprehension and to pay attention to staff	1
Passive	Expressed inactivity with others or accepting or what others do w/o responsiveness or input	1
Vision	Expressed a sense of meaning or future insight	1

### Question 6

#### Process

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
3 Step Process	Expressed a need to assess the situation to determine stakeholders and specifics of the problem “who owns the problem” and pieces, then ask questions to gather information from experts or team, and then decide on an outcome	6
2 Step Process	Expressed a need to first ask questions in order to gather information and then discuss solutions	4
No Process	Expressed a flexible decision making style that is non linear and/or depend on the situation but that drives solutions	4

#### Value in Decision Making Process

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Collaborative	Expressed a desire to be inclusive and team driven in decision making	6
Consensus	Expressed a desire to be effective in decision making by coming to a consensus or resulting in a win – win situation	4
Results	Expressed a desire to be effective in decision making while cultivating critical thinking and developing other to impact future effectiveness	3

Affect	Expressed a desire to be effective by considering the affects the decision will have on other people, employees, the team and community	3
Teach	Value the training and teaching opportunity in problems	2
Fairness	Expressed a desire to be effective in decision making by being consistent and promoting justice	1
Fact	Expressed a desire or need to collect fact and to be factual in decision making	1

**Interview Question # 4 & 5 –Share Code (meaning these questions provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 2)**

#### **Question 4**

##### **Value**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Textual or Structural Description</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Innovation	Expressed a desire for staff who are creative and who seek and implement new ideas	8
Work Ethic	Values people who work hard to get the job done and to meet goals	6
Initiative	Expressed a desire for people who are self-starter and who can work independently and has power to seek opportunities to act.	4
Communication	Expressed a desire for staff who could exchange information verbally, orally and interpersonally	4
Team	Expressed a desire to work with people who value group work and who showed good team skills	4
Integrity	Valued people who were honest and consistent in principles at work	4
Inquisitive	Expressed a desire for individuals who ask questions for clarity, concern or to benefit the company.	3
Courage	Values people who can speak up and shoes strength in the face of adversity.	3
Punctual	Expressed a value for employee who respect a sense of time and who manage time well.	3
Leadership	Expressed the desire to work with staff who are leaders	3
Motivation	Expressed a desire for individuals who are driven by enthusiasm and interest in the work or projects and who had a general “positive attitude”.	2
Loyalty	Expressed a desire to work with staff who have a	2



	sense of commitment, support and allegiance.	
Kindness	Expressed a desire to work with people who are generally friendly, generous and considerate of others.	2
Professionalism	Valued people who are professional and expressed competence and skills to do the work	2
Problem Solver	Values people who can think critically and/or who are independent thinkers	1
Results	Valued people who were able to get the work done or who met goals	1
Charisma	Valued people who have the power to express light heart and enthusiasm	1
Resilience	Expressed a desire to work with people who have the ability to bounce back and who were tenacious	1
Competency	Valued people who are intelligent and who have the needed skills and knowledge to succeed in the workplace	1
Organization	Expressed a value for people who are were systematic thinker and efficient.	1
Responsiveness	Valued people who shared input and who were attentive to request	1
Emotional Intelligence	Expressed a value for employees who has the ability and capacity to reason and manage their emotions in the workplace	1
Flexibility	Expressed a value for people who were willing to stretch and can multitask	1

### Question 5

#### Challenges w/ Employees

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Managing People	Making sure that all staff are able to effectively get the work done and are informed of expectations and held accountable in any situation and able to work together as a team	8
Teaching	Mentoring, educating or supporting growth in the team or the employee	4
Morale	Motivating the team or employee toward reaching goals and satisfying their needs as people in the workplace	3
Communication	Exchanging information via verbal, written, email etc in order to get work done or as needed for day to day interactions	3

Culture	Integrating effectiveness given the environmental aspects of the organization or industry	3
Result	Making sure the goals are being met and that employees are doing the work effectively and taking care of business.	2
Respect	Engendering the admiration from staff based more on abilities and less on personal presumptions	1
Mistakes	Correcting mistakes of employees	1
Industry	Integrating the culture and the environment for which business is being done	1
Vision	Articulating the vision of the organization and helping employees see past the “right now” to the future goals	1

**Interview Question 7 –Own Code (meaning these questions provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 3)**

### Question 7

#### Roles

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Many	Viewed women as capable, critical and visual in leadership roles and in nontraditional roles women expanding in presence and taking a place in those roles	7
Any	Viewed women as capable to be in any leadership role and their being no disadvantage to having women leaders	7

#### Disadvantages

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Work Life Balance	Expressed a concern or hardship having to balance work and family obligations and leveraging “having it all”	8
Familiarity	Expressed a consciousness that marketplace and work environment may exclude women in leadership because woman are not the same and people gravitate toward people thereby forming a network for men only	4
Actualization	Women don’t see themselves as eligible for leadership	4
Ceiling	Not many women in the role because it is	4

	nontraditionally for women and those door or caps on advancement haven't been penetrated and characterized by a lack of mobility	
Readiness	People lack of readiness for women in certain roles or rejection or fear of women in roles	3
Emotional	Women are seen as less rational in work and decision making and easily aroused emotionally	3
Eligibility	Expressed a understanding or perception that women may not be qualified because how they are socialized	2
Inequity	Expressed an consciousness that men don't see women as equal and are not given what is equal value	2
Stereotypes	Having to combat widely held belief and images of women and women in leadership	1
Respect	Women are not respected or recognized for their in leadership roles or leadership accomplishments	1

### Advantages

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
New Perspective	Women add new viewpoints to the discussion which may have been missing in leadership based on the experience of women.	9
Nurturer	Characterized by a genuine care for people and staff and a motherly way of leading	8
Open Minded	Expressed a general feeling that women are open to new ideas and more able to take risk and be diverse	3
New Ideas	Women add value to the organization because they bring innovation and creativity	2
Team	Women are better able to manage teams and consider the whole unit (as opposed to the bottom line) in decision making	2
Vision	Women are visionary and are big picture focused	2
Flexible	Women flexible given the many hats they wear in their life experiences	2
Communication	Women are able to speak verbally and clear will being open and compassionate listeners	2
Motivate	Women have the nature ability to promote people growth and are encouragers/cheerleaders toward work goals	1

**Interview Question # 2, 8, 9 & 10 –Share Code (meaning these questions provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 4)**

### **Question 2**

#### **Obstacles**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Textual or Structural Description</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Door	Experienced or expressed a challenge getting in the door or having access to opportunities or having limited access to certain professional communities or networks that would promote social capital or resources	4
First	Experienced or expressed being the first or the only or one of a few women or African Americans	4
Visible	Experience or expressed a need to be heard or have a voice based on being socialized to be quiet or polite and a struggle to be recognized	3
Stereotypes	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities while having to combat widely held belief and images of women and women in leadership	3
Within Gender	Experienced or expressed a struggle or conflicts with female counterparts	2
Experience	Experienced or expressed lack of or limited practical knowledge or experience within profession	2
Work Life Balance	Experienced or expressed a concern or hardship for having to balance work and family obligations and leveraging “having it all”	2
Mentor	Experienced or expressed a lack of or limited access to role models, idols, advisers, teachers, either personally or professionally.	2
Gender	Experienced or expressed obstacles based on being a woman	2
Respect	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities based on being a woman and not being respected or recognized for their in leadership roles or leadership accomplishments.	2
Up	Learning how to manage those persons above on the organizational hierarchy	2
Industry	Experienced or expressed changes specific to or because of the environment or marketplace for which their situated in	2
Educating	Experienced or expressed an obligation to teach non-black people about black people	2

Education	Experienced or expressed a lack of field specific or formal education	1
Comparison	Experienced or expressed a feeling of being compared to others either internally or externally	1
Communication	Experienced or expressed struggle in communication, feeling as if candor is a downfall, for example.	1
Transportation	Experienced or expressed a hardship getting around (mobility)	1
Late	Experienced or expressed changing career paths midway or going to school or entering career later in life, so being a “late bloomer”	1
Norm	Experienced or expressed a sense of something less than normal, not feeling normal or not like others	1
Intersectionality	Experienced or expressed a obstacles based on both gender and race or a combination of gender, race and class	1
Twice	Experienced or expressed hardship or adversities having to work harder than counterparts in order to prove value or stay ahead or simply an extra drive to achieve higher than others or self.	1
Generation	Experienced or expressed conflict based on generational differences either with others or just in career	1
Leadership	Experienced or expressed stress do to the higher demand	1
Tech	Experienced or expressed adversity due to the speed or change in technology	1
No Obstacles	Experienced or expressed no blatant obstacles on career journey	1
No Vision	Experienced or expressed having little to no vision for future which hindered career initiation or growth	1

### Question 8

#### Rise to the Top

Hard Answer

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Yes	Did feel rise to the top in career was harder a black women	6
No	Did not feel rise to the top in career was harder as a	5

	black women	
Maybe	Relatively yes or no – meaning rise to the top was harder depending on situation, environment and circumstances	2
Yes- Gender	Rise to the top was harder because of gender not gender and race (Black Female)	1

## Reason

<b>Code</b>	<b>Textual or Structural Description</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
First	Experienced or expressed being the first or the only or one of a few woman or African Americans	5
Male Dominated	Experiences are tougher career journey because the industry, company, top executives or community was male dominated or white male dominated	3
Expectation	People didn't expect black women to be competent or have common sense to be in the highest positions. They expected the stereotypes	3
Twice	Experienced or expressed hardship or adversities associated with having to work harder than counterparts in order to prove value or stay ahead or simply an extra drive to achieve higher than others.	3
Respect	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities based on being a woman and not being respected or recognized for their in leadership roles or leadership accomplishments.	2
Stereotypes	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities while having to combat widely held belief and images of women and women in leadership	2
Door	Experienced or expressed a challenge getting in the door or having access to opportunities or having limited access to certain communities or networks professionally that would promote social capital or resources	1
Industry	Experienced or expressed changes specific to or because of the environment or marketplace for which their situated in	1
Norm	Experienced or expressed a sense of something less than normal, not feeling normal or not like others	1
Intersectionality	Experienced or expressed a obstacles based on both gender and race or a combination of gender,	1

	race and class	
Equilibrium	Hardship is a part of the normal way of the culture or workplace it keeps things balanced	1

### Question 9

#### Stereotypes

Hard Answer

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Yes	Black female stereotypes do impact me	7
No	Black female stereotypes do not impact me	5
Maybe	Relatively yes or no –black female stereotypes do or don't impact me meaning depending on situation, environment, the people and circumstances	2

Explanations

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Characteristics	Characteristics of the all of the black female stereotypes may describe me or peers on any given day but you are not all of one are one in all	9
Superwoman	See others as or perceived as a superwoman as by peers or counterparts because of results, work ethic, or ability to withstand hardship	7
Mammy	See other as or perceived a mammy by peers or counterparts because of the nurturing leadership style	4
First	Experienced or expressed being the first or the only or one of a few woman or African Americans	3
Buy in	Black female stereotypes are real if only if you buy into them or own them	3
Expectations	People didn't expect black women to be competent or have common sense or be in the highest positions. They expected the stereotypes	2
Perceptions	People have preconceived insights on what black female leaders are or what a leader is	2
Professionalism	Professionalism overrides stereotypes	1
Crazy Black Bitch	See other people as or perceived a CBB	1
Intersectionality	Experienced or expressed a obstacles based on	1

	both gender and race or a combination of gender, race and class	
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### Question 10

Hard Answer

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Yes	Encounter limitations	11
No	Did not encounter limitations	3

Reason

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Intersectionality	Experienced or expressed a obstacles based on both gender and race or a combination of gender, race and class	11
Perceptions	People have preconceived insights on what black female leaders are or what a leader is	11
Gender	Experienced or expressed obstacles based on being a woman	1
Expectation	People didn't expect black women to be competent or have common sense or be in the highest positions. They expected the stereotypes	1

Limitation

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Communication	Experienced or expressed struggle in communication style, feeling as if candor is a downfall, for example.	11
Mentor	Experienced or expressed a lack of or limited access to role models, idols, advisers, teachers, either personally or professionally.	6
Stereotypes	Experienced or expressed adversities due to "a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing: "sexual and racial stereotypes"	4
Experience	Experienced or expressed lack of or limited practical knowledge or experience within profession or industry	2
First	Experienced or expressed being the first or the	2



	only or one of a few woman or African Americans	
Inequity	Expressed an consciousness that men don't see women as equal and are not given what is considered equal value	2
Concrete	Higher level discrimination that causes qualified people to be overlooked for growth opportunities	1
Respect	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities based on being a woman and not being respected or recognized for their in leadership roles or leadership accomplishments or value.	1
Biases	Experienced "prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair"	1

**Interview Question # 11 & 12 –Share Code (meaning these questions provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 5)**

### Question 11

#### Opportunities

Hard Answer

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Yes	Yes – I believe I had the same opportunities	6
No	No – I do not believe I had the same opportunities	6
Maybe	Relatively yes or no –me meaning depending on situation, environment, organization, circumstances and the stakeholders	2

Reason

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Door	Experienced or expressed a challenge getting in the door or having access to opportunities or having limited access to certain communities or networks professionally that would promote social capital or resources	5
Ceiling	Not many women in the role because it is nontraditionally for women and those door or caps on advancement haven't been penetrated and characterized by a lack of mobility	3
Network	Possess the contacts and relationships to sustain	2
First	Experienced or expressed being the first or the	2

	only or one of a few woman or African Americans	
Twice	Work harder than counterparts in order to prove value or stay ahead or simply an extra drive to achieve higher than others or self.	2
Qualification	Combination of experience, personal attributes and/or education make promotes capability in the job	2
Tenure	The length of time in industry/business affords opportunity	1
Niche	Having a professional quality that set you apart from others	1
Limited Upward	Lack of or very few opportunities to move up either within organization or in industry	1
Negotiation/ (CN) Communication	Able to assess assets and limitations in order to discuss value propositions	1
Self Esteem/Self Efficacy (SE)	Have a sense of pride and worth in self	1
Inequity	Experienced or expressed an consciousness that men don't see women as equal and are not given what is equal value	1
Racism	Experience or expressed limitations because of birth origin, culture and ethnicity.	1
Stereotypes	Experienced or expressed hardships or adversities while having to combat widely held belief and images of women and women in leadership	1
Familiarity	Expressed a conscious that marketplace and work environment may exclude women in leadership because woman are not the same and people gravitate toward people thereby forming a network for men only	1

### Question 12

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Faith	Having or believing in favor from a higher power	5
Results/Work Ethic	Work hard to get the job done and to meet goals or produce positive outcomes	5
Network	Associated and relations	4
Preparedness Knowledgeable	Knowing your industry, business, and/or job or staying abreast of changes in industry, business and/or job	4
Mentors	Role models, idols, advisers, teachers, either personally or professionally	3
Champions	Supports, cheerleaders or people who	3

	encourage/promote you	
Twice	Work harder than counterparts in order to prove value or stay ahead or simply an extra drive to achieve higher than others or self.	3
Buy In	Black female stereotypes are real only if you buy into (believe) them or own them	3
Niche	Having a professional quality that set you apart from others	2
Education	Being educated formally in order to gain access	2
Resilience	The ability to withstand hardship, challenge, stress or adversities and have a positive outcome	2
Family	Relying on close family members for support advice or encourage	2
Self Esteem/Self Efficacy	Have a sense of pride and worth in self	2
Authenticity	Staying true to who you are	1
Lucky	Having or believing in good fortune	1
Team Work	Building or surrounding oneself with a great group of professions or colleague who are get the job done together	1
Mistakes	Learning from failures and mistake of others or yourself	1
Help	Asking for advice or help when needed or available	1
Plan	Having a vision and implementation method for your future or career success	1

**Interview Question # 13 & 14 –Share Code (meaning these questions provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 6)**

#### Question 13

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Mistakes	Learn from your failures and mistake of others	4
Sharing	Notion or attitude that success is validation or requires one to help someone after self	3
Negotiation/ (CN) Communication	Able to communicate assets and limitations in order to discuss value propositions	3
Personal Values (PV)	Having a sense of your individual beliefs and system	3
Ethics	Having a sense of social or personal responsibility or integrity	2
Actualization	See yourself as eligible for leadership	2
Teamwork	Building or surrounding oneself with a great group of professions or colleague who are get the job done together	2
Cultivation	A work environment or superior that encourages	1

	development of staff's skillset or leadership characteristics	
Respect	Recognition for leadership roles and accomplishments or value	1
DMS	The ability to make decisions and have the outcomes rest on your shoulders	1
Change	Not having a fear of change in people, environment, business or community	1
Critical Thinking (CT)	The ability to problem solve and a systemic way to resolve problems	1
Twice	Work harder than counterparts in order to prove value or stay ahead or simply an extra drive to achieve	1
Positive Attitude	Philosophy that is optimistic and the demonstrates confidence	1
Champions	Supports, cheerleaders or people who encourage/promote you	1
Self Esteem/Self Worth	Have a sense of pride and worth in self	1
Humble	Having a since of balance and modesty	1

#### Question 14

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Awareness	Being aware of cultural or people problems and of situations	4
Manage people	Ability to ensure that all staff are able to effectively get the work done and are informed of expectations and held accountable in any situation and able to work together as a team	3
Mentor	Role models, idols, advisers, teachers, either personally or professionally	2
Experience	Have the practical knowledge or experience within profession or industry	2
Vision	Insight or plan	1
Teamwork	Building or surrounding oneself with a great group of professions or colleague who are get the job done together	1
Organization	Possessing a quality of arranging information or elements systematically	1
Network	Possess the contacts and relationships to sustain	1
Back Seat	The ability to let someone else lead for the sake of the whole	1
Change	Not having a fear of change in people, environment,	1

	business or community	
Diversity	Being open to differences in the workplace in order to grasp the benefit of difference and multiple perspectives	1
Up	Learning how to manage those persons above on the organizational hierarchy	1
Ethics	Having a sense of social or personal responsibility or integrity	1
Value	Being inclusive and valuing others input	1
Work Life Balance	The ability to balance work and family obligations and leverage responsibly	1
Create	The ability to create opportunities for self	1

**Interview Question #15, 16, 17, 18 & 19 –Share Code (meaning these questions provide codes that are unique to Research Question # 7)**

#### Question 15

Hard Answer

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Yes	I have a philosophy	12
No	I do not have a philosophy	2

#### Type

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
People	Philosophy is driven by people as opposed to internal reward/gain, positive in nature	7
Faith	Philosophy lead by a belief in a higher power	5
Drive	Philosophy is action orientated for continuances or movement in career or in life	4
Learning (learn)	Philosophy is driven by learning	1

#### Question 16

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Faith	Having or believing in a higher power	8
Mentor	Rely on role models, idols, advisers, teachers, either personally or professionally to be a sounding board	6
Network	Having people you can talk to	6
Meditation	Seeking balance in thoughts and energy	3
Counseling	Speaking to a professional who can be objective or	3

	help you work through problems	
Family	Relying on close family members for support advice or encourage	2
Health	Exercise, good sleep and eating right for balance	1
Plan	Rely on a plan whether secondary or financial	1
Intuition	The ability to foresee	1

## Question 17

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Half Full	I am optimistic about my life, future and opportunities	6
Depends	Relatively yes or no –me meaning depending on situation, environment, the people, organization and circumstances	5
Over	The cup is so full it is running over	2
Half	I see the cup just half, it is what it is	1
Half Empty	I am pessimistic about my life, future and/or opportunities	0

## Question 18

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Good	One who is cool under pressure can think, delegate, motivate and solve the issue	5
Invincible	One who can handle anything that comes her way	4
Systematic	Processes situations in order to apply a resolution	3
Positive	See the good in situations	2

## Question 19

Code	Textual or Structural Description	Occurrences
Outlook	Personal values or perspectives or positive attitude	4
Care	Empathy and compassion for others	3
Humble	Having a sense of balance and modesty	2
Lucky	Having or believing in good fortune	2
Faith	Having favor from or belief in a higher power	2
Parents	Family upbringing and foundation	2
Niche	Having a professional quality that set you apart from others	2
Open	Nonjudgmental or open minded	1
Resilience	Ability to bounce back positively	1

Actualization	See self as eligible for leadership and comfortable in it	1
Courage	A fearless spirit	1
Authenticity	True to self	1